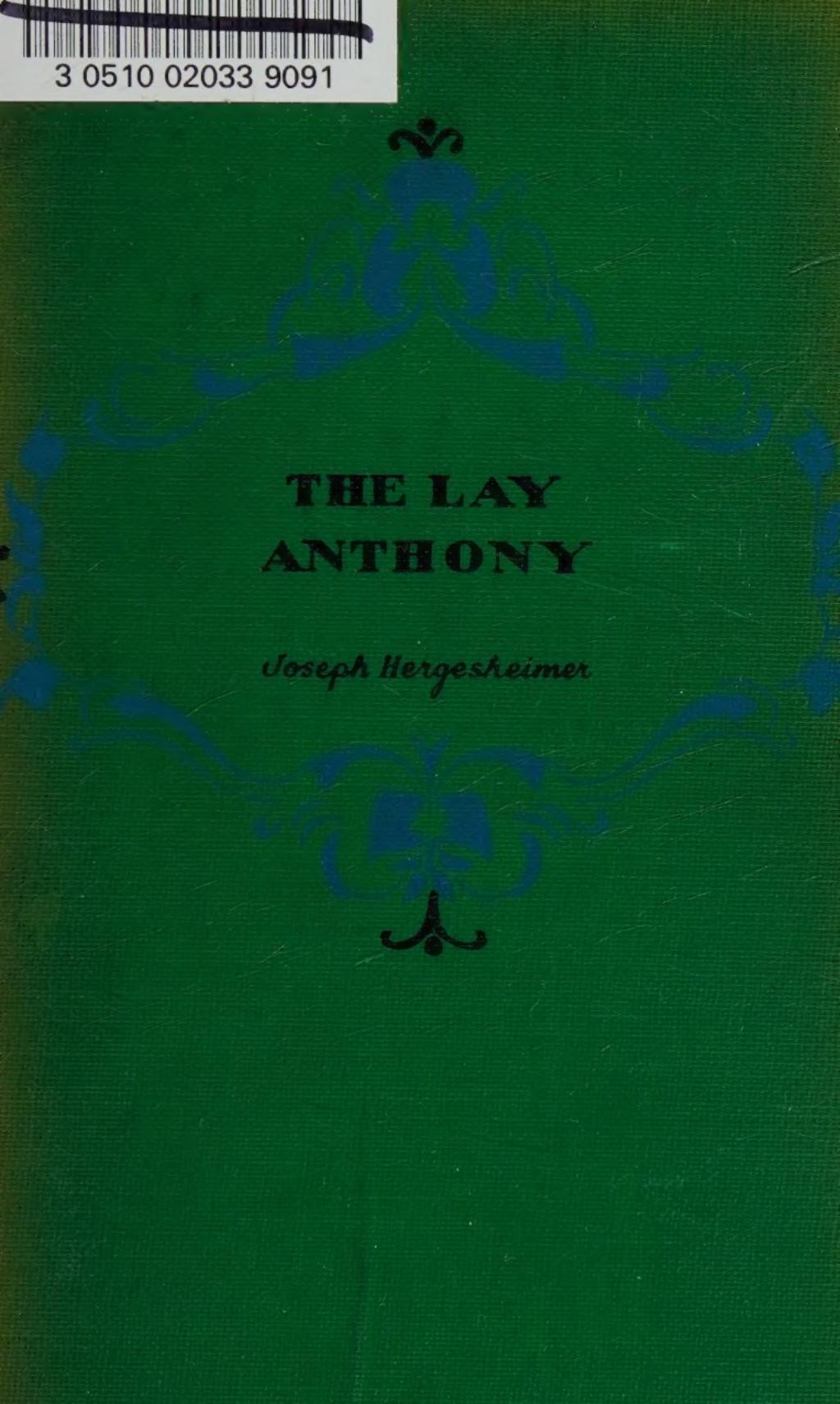


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THE LAY ANTHONY

Joseph Hergesheimer



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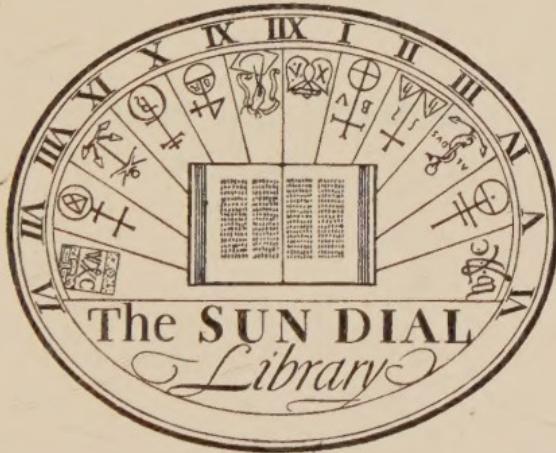
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LAY ANTHONY

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER



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To
DOROTHY
This
*Figment of a Perpetual
Flowering*

*“. . . if in passing from this deceitful world
into true life love is not forgotten, . . . I know
that among the most joyous souls of the third
heaven my Fiametta sees my pain. Pray her, if
the sweet draught of Lethe has not robbed me of
her, . . . to obtain my ascent to her.”*

—GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

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I

NOT for the honor of winning the Vanderbilt Cup, nor for the glory of pitching a major league baseball team into the world's championship, would Tony Ball have admitted to the familiar and derisive group in the drugstore that he was—in the exact, physical aspect of the word—pure. Secretly, and in an entirely natural and healthy manner, he was ashamed of his innocence. He carefully concealed it in an elaborate assumption of wide worldly knowledge and experience, in an attitude of cynical comprehension and indifference toward *girls*.

But he might have spared himself the effort, the fictions, of his pose. Had he proclaimed his ignorance aloud from the brilliantly lighted entrance to the drugstore, no one who knew him in the midweek night throng on Ellerton's main street would have credited Anthony with anything

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beyond a thin and surprising joke. He was, at twenty, the absolute, adventurous opposite of any conscious or cloistered virtue. The careless carriage of his big, loose frame; his frank, smiling grey eyes and ample mouth; his very drawling voice—all marked him for a loiterer in the pleasant and sunny places of life, indifferent to the rigors of a mental or moral discipline.

The accumulated facts of his existence fully bore out this suggestion: the number of schools which, playing superlative baseball, he had still been obliged to leave—carrying with him the cordial good-will of master and fellow—for an unconquerable, irresponsible laxity; the number and variety of occupations that had claimed him in the past three years, every one of which at its inception was certain, he felt confident, to carry him to resplendent and glittering pinnacles; and every one—in his rapidly diminishing interest, attention, or because of persistent adverse conditions over which, he asseverated, he had no control—turning into a fallow field, a disastrous venture. And, conclusively, the group of fa-

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miliars, the easy companions of idle hours, to whom he had gravitated.

He met his mates by appointment at Doctor Allhop's drugstore, or by an elaborate system of whistled formulæ from the street, at which he would rise from the dinner table with a muttered excuse and disappear. He was rarely if ever sought outright at his father's house; it was quite another sort of boy who met and discoursed easily with sisters, who, unperturbed, greeted mothers face to face.

It would have been useless, had he known it, to protest his virtue inside the drugstore or out; a curious chain of coincidences had preserved it. Again and again he had been at the point of surrendering his involuntary Eden; and always the accident, the interruption, had befallen, always he had retired in a state of more or less orderly celibacy. On the occasion of one of those nocturnal metropolitan escapades by which matured boys, in a warm red veil of whiskey, assert their manhood and independence, he had been thrust in a drunken stupor into the baggage car of the

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“owl” train to Ellerton. Instances might be multiplied: life, in its haphazard manner, its uncharted tides and eddies sweeping arbitrarily up and down the world, had carelessly preserved in him that concrete ideal toward which myriads of heroic and agonized beings had striven terribly and in vain.

And so it happened, when Doctor Allhop turned with an elaborate impropriety from the pills he was compounding in a porcelain pestle, that Anthony’s laugh was loudest, his gusto most marked, in the group gathered at the back of the drugstore. A wooden screen divided them, hid the shelves of bottles, the water sink, and the other properties and ingredients of the druggist’s profession, from the glittering and public exhibition of the finished article, the marble slab and silver mouths of the soda-water fountain, the uninitiated throng.

He was sitting on a case of prepared food, his legs thrust out before him, and a thread of smoke coiled bluely from the cigarette held in his broad, scarred hand. There was a little gay song on

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his lips, and a roving, gay glint in his direct gaze. At frequent intervals he surveyed with approbation maroon socks and a pair of new and shining pumps; the rest of his apparel was negligent.

The sole chair was occupied by the plump bulk of Thomas Addington Meredith, to whom a sharp nose in a moonlike countenance lent an expression of constant inquiry and foxy caution. He was elaborately appareled in a suit which boasted a waistcoat draped with the gold chain of an authentic timepiece; closing a silver cigarette case scrolled large with his initials, a fat finger bore a ruby that, rumor circulated, had been the gift of a married woman.

Lounging against a shelf, Alfred Craik gazed absently at his blackened and broken fingernails, his greasy palms. He was Anthony's partner in the current industry of a machine-shop and garage, maintained in a dilapidated stable on the outskirts of Ellerton—it was a concern mainly upheld by a daily levy on the Ball family for necessary tools and accessories. He was, as always, silent, detached.

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But William Williams amply atoned for any taciturnity on the part of the others; he had returned a short while before from two checkered years in the West; and, a broad felt hat cinched with a carved leather band pushed back from his brow, and waving the formidable stump of a cigar, he enlarged excitedly on the pleasures of that far, liberal land.

"Why," he proclaimed, "I owe a saloon keeper in San Francisco sixty-five dollars for one round of drinks—the joint was full and it was up to me . . . nothing but champagne went, understand! He knows he'll get it. Why, I collared ten dollars a day overseeing sheep. I cleaned up three thousand in one little deal; it was in Butte City; it lasted nine days. But 'Frisco's the place—all the girls there are good sports, all the men spenders."

"What did you come back East for?" Alfred Craik demanded. "Why didn't you stay right with it?"

"I got up against it," William grinned; "the old man wouldn't give me another stake." The

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thought of the glories he had been forced to relinquish started him afresh. "I cleaned up enough in a week at billiards," he boasted, "to keep me in Ellerton a year."

"Didn't Bert Dingley take four bits from you last night at Hinkle's?" Anthony lazily asked.

"That farmer!" the other scoffed. "I had a rank cue; they are all rank at Hinkle's. I'll match him in a decent parlor for any amount."

"How much will you put up?" Meredith demanded; "I'll back Bert."

"How much have you got?" William queried.

"How much have you?"

"If this was San Francisco I could get a hundred."

"What have you got in real coin, Bill?" Tony joined in.

"Three nickels," William Williams admitted moodily.

"I've got thirty-five cents," Thomas added. "I wish I could get a piece of change."

"How's the car?" Anthony turned to his partner in the lull that followed. The "car," their

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sole professional charge, had been placed in their hands by an optimistic and benevolent connection of the Balls.

"I had the differential apart again to-day," Alfred responded, "but I can't find that grinding anywhere. It will have to be all torn down," he announced with somber enthusiasm.

"You have had that dam' thing apart three times in the last four weeks, and every time you put it together it's worse," Anthony protested. "The cylinder casing leaks, and God knows what you did to the gears."

"I wish I had a piece of change," Thomas Meredith repeated, in a manner patently mysterious.

"A temporary sacrifice of your tin shop—" Doctor Allhop suggested, turning from the skillful molding of the pills on a glass slab.

"Not a chance! the family figurehead announced that he had taken my watch 'out' for the last time."

"He wants to plaster it on some high school skirt," Alfred announced unexpectedly.

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"This robbing the nursery makes me ill," William protested. "Out in Denver there are real queens with gold hair—"

His period was lost in a yapping chorus from the West-wearied circle. "Take it to bed with you," he was entreated.

"Nothing in the high school can reach these," Meredith assured them. "This is the real thing—an all night seance. They have just moved in by the slaughter house; a regular pipe—their father is dead, and the old woman's deaf. Two sisters . . . one has red hair, and the other can kick higher'n you can hold your hand. The night I went I had to leave early, but they told me to come back . . . any night after nine, and bring a friend."

"I'll walk around with you," William Williams remarked negligently.

"Not on three nickels. They told me to fetch around a couple of bottles of port wine, and have a genuine party."

Anthony Ball listened with rapidly growing attention, while he fingered three one dollar bills

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wadded into the bottom of his pocket. He felt his blood stir more rapidly, beating in his ears; vague pictures thronged his brain of girls with flaming hair, dexterous flashing limbs, white frills, garters. With an elaborate air of unconcern he asked: "Are they goodlookers?"

"Oh, Boy! they have got that hidden fascination."

Anthony made a swift reckoning of the price of port; it would wipe out the sum he was getting together for badly needed baseball shoes. . . . Red hair! . . . He could count on no further assistance from his father that month; the machine-shop at present was an expense.

"Got any coin?" Meredith demanded.

"A few."

The other consulted with importance the ostentatious watch. "Just the minute," he announced. "Come along; we can get the port at the Eagle; we'll have a Paris of a time."

Doctor Allhop offered an epigrammatic parallel between two celebrated planets.

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"I need new ball shoes," Anthony temporized; "I ripped mine the last game."

Meredith rose impatiently. "Charge them to the family," he ejaculated. "But if you don't want to get in on this, there are plenty of others. Two or three dollars are easy to raise in a good cause. Why, the last night I spent in the city cost me seventeen bucks."

"I guess I'll come." Anthony instinctively barred his sudden eagerness from his voice. He rose, and was surprised to find that his knees were trembling. His face was hot too—he wondered whether it were red? whether it would betray his inexperience? "If they hand me any Sunday-school stuff," he proclaimed bigly, "I'll step right on it; I'm considerably wise to these dames."

"This is the real, ruffled goods." Meredith settled a straw hat with a blue band on his sleek head, and Anthony, dragging a faded cap from his pocket, drew it far over his eyes. William Williams regarded them enviously. Craik's thoughts

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had wandered far, his lips moved silently. And Doctor Allhop had disappeared into the front of the drugstore.

II

“**L**EТ’S get along,” Anthony said in a thick, strange voice. He stumbled forward; his eyes were hot, blurred; he tried in vain to winkle clear his vision. Suddenly his elbow struck sharply against a shelf, and there was an answering crash, the splintering of glass smashing upon the floor. Doctor Allhop hurried in to the scene of the disaster. “You young bull among the bottles!” he exclaimed in exasperated tones; “a whole gross of perfume, all the white lilac, lost.”

Anthony Ball stood motionless, embarrassed and annoyed by the accident, and great, heavy coils of the scent rose about him; they filled his nostrils with wave on wave of pungent odor, and stung his eyes so that he shut them. The scent seemed to press about him, to obstruct his breathing, weigh upon his heart; he put out a hand as if to ward it off. It seemed to him that great masses of the flower surrounded him, shutting

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him with a white, sweet wall from the world. He swayed dizzily; then vanquished the illusion with an expression of regret for the damage he had wrought.

The Doctor was on his knees, brushing together the debris; William Williams guffawed; and Craik smiled idly. Meredith swore, tapping a cigarette on his silver case. "You're a parlor ornament, you are," he told Anthony.

A feeling of impotence enveloped the latter, a sullen resentment against an occurrence the inevitable result of which must descend like a shower of cold water upon his freshly-stirred desires. "I am sorry as hell, Doctor," he repeated; "what did that box cost you?"

"Six seventy," Allhop shot impatiently over his shoulder.

Anthony produced his three dollars, and smoothing them, laid the sum on a table. "I will stop in with the rest to-morrow morning," he said. The Doctor rose and turned, partly mollified; but, to avoid the argument which he felt might follow, Anthony strode quickly out into the drug-

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store. There at the white marble soda-water fountain a bevy of youth was consuming colorific cones of ice cream, drinking sirupy concoctions from tall, glistening glasses. They called him by name, but he passed them without a sign of recognition, still the victim of his jangling sensibilities.

III

BAY STREET was thronged; the shops displayed broad lighted windows filled with their various merchandise; in front of a produce store a row of chickens hung, bare, bright blue and yellow, head down; from within came the grinding of a coffee machine, the acrid voices of women bargaining. The glass doors to the fire-engine house stood open, the machines glimmering behind a wide demilune of chairs holding a motley assemblage of men. Farther along, from above, came the shuffle of dancing feet, the thin, wiry wail of violins. At the corners groups of youths congregated, obstructing the passerby, smirking and indulging in sudden, stridulous bursts of laughter. The sky was infinitely remote, intensely, tenderly blue, the stars white as milk; from the countryside immediately surrounding came the scented breaths of early summer—the trailing sweetness of locust blooms, of hidden

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hedges of honeysuckle, of June roses, and all the pungent aroma of growing grasses, leaves, of fragile and momentary flowers.

Anthony made his way brusquely through the throng, nodding shortly to the countless salutations that marked his progress. The youths all knew him, and the majority of the men; women stopped in their sharp haggling to smile at him; garlands of girls gay in muslins “Mistered” him with pretty propriety or followed him more boldly over their shoulders with inviting eyes.

He impatiently disregarded his facile popularity; the tumult within him settled into a dull, unreasoning anger against the universe at large. He still owed Doctor Allhop four dollars and seventy cents; he had told the Doctor that he would pay to-morrow, and he should be compelled to go to his father. The latter was a rigorously just man, Anthony gladly recognized; the money would be instantly forthcoming, but he was not anxious to recall the deficiencies of his present position to his father just then. He had passed twenty, and—beyond his ability to cause a base-

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ball to travel in certain unexpected tangents, and an informal comprehension of the conduct of automobiles—he was totally without assets, and without any light on the horizon.

He had been willing to work, he reminded himself resentfully, but bad luck had overtaken him at every turn. The venture before the machine-shop—a scheme of squabs, the profits of which, calculated from an advertisement, soared with the birthrate of those prolific birds—had been ruined by rats. The few occasions when he had neglected to feed the pigeons had had, despite the frank and censorious opinion of the family, little or nothing to do with that misfortune. And, before that, his kennel of rabbit dogs had met with an untimely fate when a favorite bitch had gone mad, and a careful commonwealth had decreed the death of the others. If his mother could but be won from the negative she had placed upon baseball as a professional occupation, he might easily rise through the minor leagues to a prideful position in the ranks of the national pastime—Lonnie This was paid fourteen hun-

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dred yearly for his prowess with the leather sphere, Hans That's removal from one to another club had involved thousands of dollars.

He heard his name pronounced in a peremptory manner, and stopped to see cross the street the relative whose automobile had been placed in his care.

"What in the name of the Lord have you young dunces done to my car?" the older man demanded.

"We have been trying to locate that grinding," Anthony told him in as conciliatory a manner as he could assume.

"Well," the other proceeded angrily, "you have ruined it this time; the gears slide around like a plate of ice cream."

"It was nothing but a pile of junk when we took it," Tony exploded; "why don't you loosen up and get a real car?"

"I took it to Feedler's. You can send me a bill to-morrow."

"There will be no bill. I'm sorry you were not satisfied, Sam."

"You are the most shiftless young dog in the

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county," the other told him in kindlier tones. "Why don't you take hold of something, Anthony?"

Anthony swung on his heel and abruptly departed. He had taken hold, he thought hotly, times without number, but everything broke in his grasp.

The stores on Bay Street grew more infrequent, the rank of monotonous brick dwellings closed up, family groups occupied the steps that led to the open doors. The crowd grew less, dwindling to a few aimless couples, solitary pedestrians. He soon stopped before his home. Opposite, the gaunt skeleton of a building operation rose blackly against the pale stars. The aged lindens above him, thickly leaved, cast an intenser gloom—filled with the warm, musty odor of the sluiced pavement—about the white marble steps. The hall, open before him, was a cavern of coolness; beyond, in the garden shut from the street by an intricate, rusting iron fence, he heard the deliberate tones of his sister Ellie. Evidently there was a visitor, and he entered the hall noiselessly,

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intent upon passing without notice to his room above. But Ellie had been watching for him, and called before he had reached the foot of the stairs.

IV

HE made his way diffidently through a long window to the lawn, where he saw his sister, a glimmering, whitish shape in the heavily overgrown garden, conversing with a figure without form or detail, by a trellis sagging beneath a verdurous weight.

“Oh, Tony!” she called: “here’s Mrs. Dreen.”

He leaned forward awkwardly, and grasped a slim, jewelled hand. “I didn’t know you were back from France,” he told the indistinct woman before him.

“But you read that Mr. Dreen had resigned the consulship at Lyons,” a delicate, rounded voice rejoined, “and you should have guessed that we would come home to Ellerton. My dear Ellie”—she turned to the girl—“you have no idea how delighted James is at being here once more. He has given the farmer notice, and insists that he is going to cultivate his own acres. He was up

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this morning at six; fancy, after France and his late *déjeuner*. And Eliza adores it; she spends the day with a gardener, planning flowerbeds."

Anthony slipped into an easy posture on the thick, damp sod. Although he had not seen Mrs. James Dreen since his childhood, when she had accompanied her husband abroad to a consular post, he still retained a pleasant memory of her magnetic and precise charm, the impression of her harmonious personality, the beauty of her apparel and rings.

"How is Eliza?" he asked politely, and with no inward interest. "She must be a regular beauty by now."

"No," Mrs. Dreen returned crisply, "she is not particularly good-looking, but she has always told me the truth. Eliza is a dear." Anthony lighted a cigarette, and flipped the match in a minute gold arc, extinguished in the night.

"I am decidedly uneasy about Eliza, though," she continued to Ellie; "to tell the truth, I am not sure how she will take over here. She is a serious child; I would say temperamental, but

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that's such an impossible word. She is absolutely and transparently honest and outspoken—it's *ghastly* at times. The most unworldly person alive; with her, thought and action are one, and often as not her thoughts are appalling. All that, you know, doesn't spell wisdom for a girl.

"Yet James and I couldn't bear to . . . make her harder. A great deal of care. . . . If she *is* my daughter, Ellie, she is exquisite—so sensitive, sympathetic. . . ."

Anthony, absorbed in the misfortune that had overtaken the machine-shop, the impending, inevitable interview with his father, so justly rigorous, hardly gathered the sense of Mrs. Dreen's discourse. Occasional phrases, familiar and unfamiliar terms, pierced his abstraction. "Colombin's." "James's sciatica." "P't toque. . . . Camille Marchais." Then her words, centering in a statement that had captured his attention, became coherent, significant.

"Only a small affair," Mrs. Dreen explained; "to introduce Eliza to Ellerton. Nothing on a large scale until winter. . . . Dancing, or rather

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what goes down for dancing to-day. I am asking our old intimates, and have written a few informal cards."

An automobile drew up smoothly before the Balls'; its rear light winked like an angry red eye through the iron fence. Mrs. Dreen rose. In the gloom her face was girlish; there was a blur of lace at her throat, a glimmer of emeralds. "Mind you come," she commanded Ellie. "And you too, without fail," to Anthony. "Now that Hydrangea House is open again we must have our friends about us. Heavens! Howard Ball's children and mine grown up!" She moved gracefully across to a garden gate. Anthony assisted her into the motor car; the door closed with a snap.

Ellie had sunk back into her chair, and was idly twisting her fingers in the grass at her side. At her back the ivied wall of the house beyond stirred faintly with sparrows. A misshapen moon swung up through the building frame opposite, and faint shadows unfolded on the grass. Anthony flung himself moodily by his sister.

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"Sam's taken his car from us," he informed her; "that will about shut up the shop."

"Then perhaps you will bring back the screw drivers."

"To-morrow."

"What are you going to do, Tony?"

"Tell me."

"A big strong fellow . . . there must be something."

"Mother won't let me play ball in the leagues."

"Perhaps she will; we'll talk to her; it's better than nothing."

"I broke a box of rotten perfume at the drug-store, and owe the Doctor four seventy."

"It's too bad—father is never free from little worries; you are always getting into difficulties. You are different from other boys, Anthony—there doesn't seem to be any place in life for you; or you don't make a place, I can't tell which. You have no constructive sense, and no feeling of responsibility. What do you want to do with yourself?"

"I don't know, Ellie, honestly," he confessed.

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"I try like the devil, make a thousand resolutions, and then—I go off fishing. Or, if I don't, things go to the rats just the same."

"Well," she rose, "I'm going up. Don't bother father about that money: I'll let you have it. It's perfectly useless to tell you to return it."

"I swear you will get it next week," he proclaimed gratefully. "The baseball association owes me for two games."

"Haven't you promised it?"

"That's so!" he exclaimed ruefully. She laughed and disappeared into the house.

V

A BLACK depression settled over him; life appeared a huge conspiracy against his success, his happiness. The future, propounded by Ellie, was suddenly stripped of all glamour, denuded of all optimistic dreams; he passed through one of those dismaying periods when the world, himself, his pretensions, were revealed in the clear and pitiless light of reality. His friends, his circumstances, his hopes, held out no promise, no thought of pleasure. Behind him his life lay revealed as a series of failures; before him it was plotted without security. The plan, the order, that others saw, or said that they saw, presented to him only a cloudy confusion. The rewards for which others struggled, aspired, which they found indispensable, had been ever meaningless to him—to money he never gave a thought; a society organized into calls, dancing,

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incomprehensible and petty values, never rose above his horizon.

He was happiest in the freedom of the open, the woods; in the easy company of casual friends, black or white; kindly comment. He would spend a day with his dogs and gun, sitting on a stump in a snowy field, listening to the eager yelping in the distant blue wood, shooting a rare rabbit. Or tramping tirelessly the leafy paths of autumn. Or, better still, swinging through the miry October swales, coon-hunting after midnight with lantern and climbers.

But now those pleasures, in anticipated retrospect, appeared bald, unprofitable. Prolonged indefinitely, he divined, they would pall; they did not offer adequate material, aim, for the years. For a moment he saw, grinning hatefully at him, the specter of what he might become; he passed such men, collarless and unshaven, on the street corners and flung them a scornful salutation. He had paid for their drinks, hearkening negligently to their stereotyped stories, secretly gibing at their obvious good-fellowship, their eager, tremulous

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smiles. They had been, in their day, great rabbit hunters. . . . Detestable.

The mood vanished, the present closed mercifully about him, leaving him merely defiant. The town clock announced the hour in slow, jarring notes. A light shone above from Ellie's room, and he heard his father's deliberate footsteps in the hall, returning from the Ellerton Club, where, as was his invariable nightly habit, he had played cooncan. The moon, freed from the towering beams, was without color.

Anthony rose and flung away a cold, stale cigarette. The world was just like that—stale and cold. He was proceeding toward the house, when he heard footfalls on the pavement; in the obscurity he barely made out a man and a woman, walking so closely as to be not distinguishably separate. They stopped by the fence, only a few feet from where he stood concealed in the shadows, and the man took the woman's hands in his own, bending over her. Then, suddenly, clasping her in his arms, he covered her upturned face with passionate kisses. With a little fright-

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ened gasp she clung to his shoulders. The kisses ceased. Their strained, desperate embrace remained unbroken. It seemed that each was the only reality for the other in a world of unsubstantial gloom, veiled in the shifting, silvery mist of a cold and removed planet. The woman breathed with a deep, sobbing inspiration; and, when she spoke, Anthony realized that he was eavesdropping, and walked swiftly and cautiously within.

But the memory of that embrace accompanied him up the stairs, into his room. It haunted him as he lay, cool and nearly bare, on his bed. It filled him with a profound and unreasoning melancholy, new to his customary unconscious animal exuberance. All at once he thought of the red-haired girl who liked port wine; and, as he fell asleep, she stood before him, leering slyly at the side of that other broken shape which threatened him out of the future.

VI

THE shed that held the machine-shop and garage fronted upon an informal lane skirting the verdant border of the town. Beyond the fence opposite, a broad pasturage dipped and rose to the blackened ruins of a considerable brick mansion, now tenanted by a provident colony of Italians; farther hill topped green hill, the orchards drawn like silvery scarves about their shoulders, undulating to the sky. Behind the shed ranged the red roofs and tree-tops of the town.

When Anthony arrived at the seat of his industry the grass was flashing with dew and the air athrill with the buoyant piping of robins. He found the door open, and Alfred Craik awaiting him.

“She’s gone,” Alfred informed him.

“Sam told me last night; it was your infernal tinkering . . . you can’t let a machine alone.”

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Anthony dropped beside the other on the door sill.

"Could we get another car, do you think?" Alfred demanded. "I had almost finished a humming experiment on Sam's."

"This garage is closed," Anthony pronounced; "it's out of existence. The family are yelping for the screw-drivers. What do we owe?"

"Three ninety to Feedler for 'gas,' and a month's rent."

"We're bankrupt," the other immediately declared. He rose, and proceeded to collect the tools that littered the floor; then he removed the sign, "Ball and Craik. Machine Shop and Garage" from the door, and the shed relapsed into its nondescript, somnolent decay.

"There's a game with Honeydale to-day." Anthony resumed his seat. "I'm to pitch that, and another Saturday, and hear me, boy, I need the money."

Alfred gazed over the orchards, beyond the hills into the sky, and made no answer. It was evident that he was lost in a vision of gloriously

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disrupted machinery. His silence spread to Anthony, who settled back with a cigarette into the drowsy stillness. The minutes passed, hovering like bees, and merged into an hour. They could hear a horse champing in the pasture; the wail of an Italian infant came to them thinly across the green; behind them sounded mellowly the tin horn of the shad vendor.

Anthony roused himself reluctantly, recalling the debt he had to discharge at the drugstore. Ellie's crisp five-dollar bill lay in his pocket. "Later," he nodded, and made his way over the shady brick pavements through the cool perspective of maple-lined streets, where summer dresses fluttered in spots of subdued bright color, to Doctor Allhop's. The Doctor was absent, and Anthony tendered the money, with a short explanation, to the clerk. The latter smartly rang the amount on the cash register, and placed thirty cents on the counter.

"Two packs of Dulcinas," Anthony required, and dropped the cigarettes into his pocket. He made his way in a leisurely fashion toward home

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and the midday meal. At the table his mother's keen grey eyes regarded him with affectionate concern. "How do you feel, Tony?" she asked. "You were coughing last night . . . take such wretched care of yourself—" His father glanced up from the half-masted sheet of the *Ellerton Bugle*. He was a spare man of few words, with a square-cut beard about the lower part of an austere countenance. "What's the matter with him?" he demanded crisply.

"Nothing," Anthony hastily protested; "you ought to know mother."

After luncheon he extended himself smoking on the horsehair sofa in the front room. It was a spacious chamber, with a polished floor and well-worn, comfortable chairs; in a corner a lacquered table bore old blue Canton china; by the door a jar of roses dropped their pink petals; over the fireplace a tall mirror held all in silvery replica.

"Thirty cents, please," Ellie demanded; "I must get some stamps."

A wave of conscious guilt, angry self-condem-

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nation, swept over him. "I'm sorry, Ellie," he admitted; "I haven't got it."

She stood regarding him for a moment with cold disapproval. She was a slender woman, past thirty, with dark, regular features and tranquil eyes; carelessly dressed, her hair slipped over her shoulder in a cool plait.

"I am sorry," he repeated; "I didn't think."

"But it wasn't yours."

"You'll get every pretty penny of it." He rose and in orderly discretion sought his room, where he changed into his worn grey playing flannels.

VII

A HIGH board fence enclosed the Grounds of the Ellerton Baseball Association; over one side rose the rude scaffolding of a grandstand, protected from sun and rain by a covering of tarred planks; a circular opening by a narrow entrance framed the ticket seller; and around the base of the fence, located conveniently to a small boy's eye, ran a girdle of unnatural knotholes, highly improved cracks, through which an occasional fleeting form might be observed, a segment of torn sod, and the fence opposite.

A shallow flood of spectators, drawn from the various quarters of the town, converged in a dense stream at the entrance to the Grounds; troops of girls with brightly-hued ribbands about their vivacious arms, boisterous or superior squads of young males, alternated with their less volatile elders—shabby and dejected men, out at elbows and of work, in search of the respite of the sun

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and the play; baseball enthusiasts, rotund individuals with ruddy countenances, saturnine experts with scorecards.

Anthony observed the throng indifferently as he drew near the scene of his repeated past triumphs, the metal plates in his shoes grinding into the pavement. A small procession followed him, led by a colored youth—to whose dilapidated garments clung the unmistakable straws and aroma of the stable—bearing aloft Anthony's glove, and “softing” it vigorously from a natural source. A boy as round and succulent as a boiled pudding, with Anthony's cap beneath his arm, leaving behind him a trail of peanut shells, brought up the rear of this democratic escort.

There was in Anthony's mind little question of his ability to triumph that afternoon over his opponents from a neighboring town; their “battery,” he told himself, was an open book to him—a slow, dropping ball here, a speedy one across the fingers of that red-haired fielder who habitually flinched . . . and yet he wished that it had not been so hot. He thought of the game without

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particular pleasure; he was conscious of a lack of energy; his thoughts, occupied with Ellie's patient contempt, stung him waspishly.

A throng of players and hangers-on filled the contracted dressing quarters beneath the grandstand, and he was instantly surrounded by vociferous familiars. The captain of the Ellerton team drew him aside, and tersely outlined a policy of play, awaiting his opinion. Anthony nodded gravely: suddenly he found the other's earnestness a little absurd—the fate of a nation appeared to color his accents, to hang upon the result of his decision. "Sure," he said absently, "keep the field in; they won't hit me."

The other regarded him with a slight frown. "Hate yourself to-day, don't you?" he remarked. "Lay that crowd cold on the plate, though," he added; "there's a man here from the major league to look you over. Hinkle told my old man."

A quickening of interest took possession of Anthony; they had heard of him in the cities, they had discovered him worthy of the journey to Ellerton, of investigation. A vision of his

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name acclaimed from coast to coast, his picture in the playing garb of a famous organization filling the Sunday sheets, occupied his mind as he turned toward the field. The captain called mysteriously, "Don't get patted up with any purple stuff handed you before the game."

The opposing team, widely scattered, were warming; a pitcher, assuming the attitudes of an agonizing cramp, indulged in preliminary practise; the ball sped with a dull, regular thud into the catcher's mit. A ball was tossed to Anthony, a team mate backed against the fence, and Anthony, raising his hands on high, apparently overcame all the natural laws of flight. He was aware of Hinkle, prosperous proprietor of the Ellerton Pool Parlor, at his back with a stranger, an ungainly man, close-lipped, keen of vision. There were intimations of approval. "A fine wing," the stranger said. "He's got 'em all," Hinkle declared. "Hundreds of lads can pitch a good game now and again," the other told him. "They are amatoors. One in a thousand, in ten thousand, can play ball all the time; they're pro-

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fessionals; they're worth money . . . I want to see him act. . . ." They moved away.

The players were called in from the field, the captains bent over a tossed coin; and, first to bat, the Ellerton team ranged itself on benches. Then, as the catcher was drawing on his mask, Hinkle and another familiar town figure, who dedicated his days to speeding weedy horses in red flannel anklets from a precarious wire vehicle, stepped forward from the grandstand. "Mr. Anthony Ball!" Hinkle called. A sudden, tense silence enveloped the spectators, the players stopped curiously. Anthony turned with mingled reluctance and surprise. Something shone in Hinkle's hand: he saw that it was a watch. "As a testimonial from your Ellerton friends," the other began loudly. Anthony's confused mind lost part of the short oration which followed ". . . recognition of your sportsmanship and skill . . . happy disposition. The good fame of the Ellerton Baseball team . . . predict great future on the national diamond."

A storm of applause from the grandstand rip-

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pled away in opposite directions along the line sitting by the fence; boys with their mouths full of fingers whistled incredibly. Hinkle held out the watch, but Anthony's eyes were fixed upon the ground. Hinkle shook the substantial mark of Ellerton's approval, so that the ornate fob glittered in the sun, but Anthony's arms remained motionless at his sides. "Take it, you leatherkop," a voice whispered fiercely in his ear. And with a start, he awkwardly grasped the gift. "Thank you," he muttered, his voice inaudible five yards away. He wished with passionate resentment that the fiend who was yelling "Speech!" would drop dead. He glanced up, and the sight of all those excited, kindly faces deepened his confusion until it rose in a lump in his throat, blurred his vision in an idiotic, childish manner. "Ah, *call* the game, can't you," he urged over his shoulder.

The first half inning was soon over, without incident; and, as Anthony walked to the pitcher's "box," the necessity to surpass all previous efforts was impressed upon him by the watch, by the

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presence of that spectator from a major league who had come to see him "act." He wished again, in a passing irritation, that it had not been so hot. Behind the batter he could see the countenance of "Kag" Lippit staring through the wires of his mask. "Kag" executed a cabalistic signal with his left arm, and Anthony pitched. The umpire hoarsely informed the world at large that it had been a strike. A blast of derisive catcalls arose from the Ellerton partisans; another strike, shriller catcalls, and the batter retired after a third ineffectual lunge amid a tempest of banter.

The second batter hit a feeble fly, negligently attached by the third baseman, who "put it over to first" in the exuberance of his contempt. The third, Anthony disposed of with equal brevity.

He next faced the pitcher, and, succumbing to the pressure of extraordinary events, he swung the bat with a tremendous effort, and the flattened ball described a wide arc into the ready palms of the right fielder. "You're *out!*!" the umpire vociferated. The uncritical portion of the spectators voiced their pleasure in the Homeric length

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of the hit, but the captain was contemptuously cold as Anthony returned to the bench. "The high school hero," he remarked; "little Willie the Wallop. If you don't bat to the game," he added in a different tone, "if you were Eddie Plank I'd bench you."

That inning the Ellerton team scored a run: a youth hurtling headlong through the dust pressed his cheek affectionately upon the dingy square of marble dignified by the title of "home," while a second hammered him violently in the groin with the ball; one chorus shrieked, "Out by a block!" another, "Safe! safe!" He was "safe as safe!" the girls declared. The umpire's voice rose authoritatively above the tumult. "Play ball! he's safe!"

Anthony pitched that inning faultlessly; never had ball obeyed him so absolutely; it dropped, swung to the right, to the left, revolved or sped dead. The batters faded away like ice cream at a church supper. As he came in from the "box" the close-lipped stranger strode forward and grasped his shoulder. "I want to see you after

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the game," he declared; "don't sign up with no one else. I'm from—" he whispered his persuasive source in Anthony's ear. The captain commended him pithily. "He's got 'em all," Hinkle proclaimed to the assembled throng.

When Anthony batted next it was with calculated nicety; he drove the ball between short-stop and second base, and, by dint of hard running, achieved a rapturously acclaimed "two bagger." The captain then merely tapped the ball—breathlessly it was described as a "sacrifice"—and Anthony moved to the third base, whence a succeeding hit sent him "home." Another run was added to the Ellerton score, and it stood three to nothing in their favor before Anthony returned to the dusty depression from which he pitched.

He was suddenly and unaccountably tired; the cursed heat was worse than ever, he thought, wiping a wet palm on his grimy leg; above him the sky was an unbroken, blazing expanse of blue; short, sharp shadows shifted under the feet of the tense players; in the shade of the grandstand the dresses, mostly white, showed here and there a

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vivid note of yellow and violet, the crisp note of crimson. The throbbing song of a thrush floated from a far hedge . . . it stirred him with a new unrest, dissatisfaction. . . . "Kag" looked like a damned fool grimacing at him through the wire mask—exactly like a monkey in a cage. The umpire in his inflated protector, crouching in a position of rigorous attention, resembled a turtle. He pitched, and a spurt of dust rose a yard before the plate. "Ball one!" That wouldn't do, he told himself, recalling the substantially expressed confidence, esteem, of Ellerton. The captain's sibilant "steady" was like the flick of a whip. With an effort which taxed his every resource he marshalled his relaxed muscles into an aching endeavor, centered his unstable thoughts upon the exigencies of the play, and retired the batter before him. But he struck the next upon the arm, sending him, nursing the bruise, to first base. He saw the captain grimly wave the outfielders farther back; and, determined, resentful, he struck out in machine-like order the remaining batters. But he was unconscionably weary; his

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arm felt as though he had been pitching for a week, a month; and he dropped limp and surly upon the sod at a distance from the players' bench.

He batted once more, but a third "out" on the bases saved him from the fluke which, he had been certain, must inevitably follow. As he stood with the ball in his hand, facing the batter, he was conscious of an air of uncertainty spreading like a contagion through the Ellerton team; he recognized that it radiated from himself—his lack of confidence magnified to a promised panic. The center fielder fumbled a fly directly in his hands; there was a shout from Ellerton's opponents, silence in the ranks of Ellerton.

Anthony pitched with a tremendous effort. His arm felt brittle, as though it were made of glass and would break off. He could put no speed into the ball, his fingers seemed swollen, he was unable to grip it properly, control its direction. The red-haired player whom he had despised for his habitual flinching faced him, and Anthony essayed to drive the ball across his fingers. The bat swung with a vicious crack upon

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the leather sphere, a fielder ran vainly back, back. . . . The runner passed first base, and, wildly urged by a small but adequately vocal group of well-wishers, scorned second base, repudiated third, from which another player tallied a run, and loafed magnificently "home."

From the fence some one called to Anthony, "What time is it?" and achieved a huge success among the opposition. His captain besought him desperately to "come back. Where's your pep' went? you're pitching like a dead man!" Confusion fell upon the team in the field, and, in its train, a series of blunders which cost five runs. After the inning Anthony stood with a lowered, moody countenance. "You're out of this game," the captain shot at him; "go home and play with mother and the girls."

He left the field under a dropping fire of witticisms, feebly stemmed by half-hearted applause; Hinkle frowned heavily at him; the man from the major league had gone. Anthony proceeded directly through the gate and over the street toward home. The taste of profound humiliation, of

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failure, was bitter in his mouth—that failure which seemed to lie at the heart of everything he attempted, which followed him like his shadow, like the malicious influence of a powerful spite, an enmity personal and unrelenting. The sun centered its heat upon his bared head with an especial fervor; the watch, thrust hastily in a pocket, swung against his leg mockingly; the abrupt departure of that keen-eyed spectator added its hurt to his self-pride.

VIII

HE maintained a surly silence throughout dinner; but later, discovering a dress shirt laid in readiness on his bed and recalling the purport of Mrs. James Dreen's call, he announced on the crest of an overwhelming exasperation that he would go to no condemned dance. "Ellie can't go alone," his mother told him from the landing below; "and do hurry, Tony—she's almost dressed." The flaring gas jet seemed to coat his room with a heavy yellow dust; the night came in at the window as thickly purple as though it had been paint squeezed from a tube. He slowly assembled his formal clothes. An extended search failed to reveal the whereabouts of his studs, and he pressed into service the bone buttons inserted by the laundry. The shirt was intolerably hot and uncomfortable, his trousers tight, a white waistcoat badly shrunken, a collar with a frayed and iron-like edge the crowning

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misery. When, finally, he was garbed, he felt as though he had been compressed into an iron boiler; a stream of perspiration coursed down the exact middle of his back; his tie hung in a limp knot. Fiery epithets escaped at frequent intervals.

On the contrary, Ellie was delightfully cool, orderly; she waved a lacy fan in her long, delicate fingers. The public vehicle engaged to convey them to the Dreen's, a mile or more beyond the town, drew up at the door with a clatter of hoofs. It was an aged hack with complaining joints and a loose iron tire. A musty smell rose from the threadbare cushions, the rotting leather. The horse's hoofs were now muffled in the dusty country road; shadowy hedges were passed, dim white farmhouses with orange, lighted windows; the horizon outspread in a shimmering blue circle under the swimming stars.

Anthony smoked a cigarette in acute misery; already his neck felt scraped raw; a button flew jubilantly from his waistcoat; and his improvised studs failed in their appointed task. "I'm having

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the hell of a good time, I am," he told Ellie satirically.

They turned between stone pillars supporting an iron lantern, and advanced over a winding driveway to Hydrangea House, where they waited for a motor to move from the brilliantly-illuminated portal. A servant directed Anthony to the second floor, where he found a bedchamber temporarily in service as a coat room, occupied by a number of men. Most of them he knew, and nodded shortly in return to their careless salutations. They belonged to a variety that he at once envied and disdained: here they were thoroughly at ease, their ties irreproachable, their shirts without a crease. Drawing on snowy gloves they discussed women and society with fluency, gusto, emanating an atmosphere of cocktails.

Anthony produced his gloves in a crumpled wad from the tail of his coat and fought his way into them. He felt rather than saw the restrained amusement of his fellows. They spoke to him gravely, punctilioously offered cigarettes; yet, in a vague but unmistakable manner, he was made to

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feel that he was outside their interests, ignorant of their shibboleth. In the matter of collars alone he was a Patagonian to them. He recalled with regret the easy familiarity, the comfort, of Doctor Allhop's drugstore.

Then, throwing aside cigarettes, patting waist-coats into position, they streamed down to the music. The others found partners immediately, and swung into a onestep, but Anthony stood irresolutely in the doorway. The girls disconcerted him with their formal smiles, their bright, ready chatter. But Ellie rescued him, drawing him into the dance, after which he sought the porch that, looped with rose vines, crossed the face of the long, low house. There with his back against a pillar, he found a cool spot upon the tiles and such comfort as he could command.

Long windows opening from the ballroom were now segments of whirling color, now filled with gay streams, ebbing and returning. Fragmentary conversation, glowing cigarettes, surrounded him. Behind the pillar at his back a girl said softly, "Please don't."

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Then he saw Ellie, obviously searching for him, and he rose. At her side was a slim figure with a cloud of light hair. "There he is!" Ellie exclaimed; "Eliza . . . this is my brother, Anthony."

He saw that her eyes opened widely, and that her hair was a peculiar bright shade. A sort of ginger, he thought. "I made Ellie find you," she told him. "You know, you must ask me to dance; I won't be ignored at my own party."

He awkwardly muttered some conventional period, annoyed at having been found, intensely uncomfortable. In a minute more he found himself dancing, conscious of his limp tie, his crumpled and gaping shirt. He swung his partner heavily across the room, colliding with a couple which he shouldered angrily aside. The animation swiftly died from Eliza Dreen's countenance; she grew indifferent, then cold. As the music ceased, she escaped with a palable sigh of relief. He was savagely mopping his heated face on the porch when, at his elbow, a clear voice captured his attention. "A dreadful person," it said,

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"... like dancing with a locomotive. . . . A regular Apache."

He turned and saw that it was Eliza Dreen, gathering from her swift concern both that he had been the subject of her discourse, and that she was aware that he had overheard it. Back at his post at the pillar he promised himself grimly that never again would he be found in such specified company. He stripped his gloves from his wet palms and flung them far across the lawn, then recklessly eased his collar. There was a sudden whisper of skirts behind him; then Eliza seated herself on the porch's edge at his side.

IX

“**I** AM a loathsome person at times,” she informed him; “and to-night I was rather worse than usual.”

“I do dance like a—locomotive,” involuntarily.

“It doesn’t matter how you dance,” she proceeded, “and you mustn’t repeat it, it isn’t generous.” Suddenly she laughed uncontrollably. “You looked so miserable . . . your collar. . . .” It was lost in a bubbling, silvery peal. “Forgive me,” she gasped.

“I don’t mind,” he assured her. All at once he didn’t; the sting had vanished from his pride; he smiled. He saw that she wore a honey-colored dress, with a strand of pearls about her slim throat, and that her feet, in satin, were even smaller than Ellie’s. Her hair resembled more a crown of light than the customary adornment. “I didn’t want to come,” he confided: “I hate, well—going out, dancing.”

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"It doesn't suit you," she admitted frankly. "You are so splendidly bronzed and strong; you need"—she paused—"lots of room."

For this Anthony had no adequate reply. "I have this with some one," she declared as the music began again, "but I hope they don't find me; I hate it for the moment . . . I'll show you a place; it's very wicked of me." She rose and, waving him to follow, slipped over the grass. Beyond the house she stopped in the shadowy vista of a pergola; vines shut out the stars, walled them in a virid, still gloom. She sank on a low stone bench, and he dropped on the grass at her feet. A mantle of fine romance descended upon his shoulders, of subtle adventure, prodigious daring. Immaculate men, pearl-studded, were searching for her, and she had hidden herself from them with him. A new and pleasant sense of importance warmed him, flattered his self-esteem. He felt strangely at ease, and sat in silent contentment. The faint sound of violins, a burst of distant laughter, floated to him.

"It seems as if the world were rushing on, out

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there, without us," Eliza finally broke the silence, "as if they were keeping a furious pace, while we sat in some everlasting quiet wood, like Fontainebleau. Don't you adore nature?"

"I knock about a lot outside," he admitted cautiously; "often I stay out all night, by the Wingo-hocking Creek. There's a sort of cave where you can hear the falls, and the owls hunting about. I cook things in clay—fish, chickens." He paused abruptly at the latter item, recalling the questionable source of his supply. "In winter I shoot rabbits with Bert Woods—he's a barber—and Doctor Allhop, you know—the druggist."

"I am sure that your friends are very nice," she promptly assured him.

"Bert's crazy about girls," he remarked, half contemptuously.

"And you . . . don't care for them?"

"I don't know anything about them," he admitted with an abrupt, involuntary honesty.

"But there must have been—there must be—one," she persisted.

She leaned forward, and he met her gaze with

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unwavering candor. "Not that many," he returned.

"It would be wonderful to care for just one person, *always*," she continued intently. "I had a dream when I was quite young . . . I dreamed that a marvellous happiness would follow a constancy like that. Father rather laughs at me, and quotes Shakespeare—the 'one foot on land and one on shore' thing. But there were Petrarch and Laura and Dante—"

Anthony gravely considered this new idea in relation to his own, hitherto lamented, lack of experience. It dawned upon him that the idea of manly success he had cherished would appear distasteful to Eliza Dreen. She had indirectly extolled the very thing of which he had been secretly ashamed. He thought, in conjunction with her, of the familiar group at the drugstore, and in this light the latter retreat suffered a disconcerting change: Thomas Meredith appeared sly, trivial and unhealthy; Williams an empty braggard; Craik ineffectual, untidy. He surveyed himself without enthusiasm.

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"You are different from any one I ever knew," he told her.

"Oh, there are millions of me," she returned; "but you are different. I didn't like you for a sou at first; but there is something about you like —like a spring of very clear water. That's idiotic, but it's what I mean. There is an early morning feeling about you. I am very sensitive to people," she informed him; "some make me uncomfortable directly they come into the room. There was a curé at Etretat I perfectly detested, and he turned out to be an awful person."

Her name was called unmistakably across the lawn, and she rose. "They're all furious," she announced, without moving farther. Her face was pale, immaterial, in the gloom; her wide eyes dark, disturbing. A minute gold watch on her wrist ticked faintly and—it seemed to Anthony—in furious haste. Something within him, struggling inarticulately for expression, hurt; an oppressive emotion beat upon his heart. He uttered a period about seeing her again.

"Some day you may show me the place where

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the fall sounds and the owls hunt. No, don't come with me." She turned and fled.

An unreasonable conviction seized Anthony that a momentous occasion had overtaken him; he was unable to distinguish its features, discover it grave or gay; but, wrapped in the impenetrable veil of the future, it enveloped and permeated him, swept in the circle of his blood's circulation, vibrated in the cords of his sensitive ganglia. He returned slowly to the house: the brilliantly-lit, dancing figures seemed the mere figments of a febrile dream, but the music apparently throbbed within his brain.

Ellie's cool voice re-created his actual sphere. He found their hack. The driver, slumbering doubled on the seat, rose stiffly and stirred his drowsing animal into a stumbling walk. Beyond the illuminated entrance to Hydrangea House the countryside lay profoundly dim to where the horizon flared with the pale reflection of distant lightning.

"Eliza's a sweet," Ellie pronounced.

Anthony brooded without reply upon his opin-

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ion. The iron-like collar had capitulated, and rested limply upon his limp shirt; at the sacrifice of a second button his waistcoat offered complete comfort. "I am going to get a new dress suit," he announced decisively. Ellie smiled with sisterly malice. "Eliza is a sweet," she reiterated.

"You go to thunder!" he retorted. But, "She's wonderful," he admitted, and—out of his conclusive experience,—"there is not another girl like her in all the world."

"I'll agitate for the new suit," Ellie promised.

X

THE following morning he reorganized his neckties, left a pair of white flannels to be pressed at the tailor's; then, his shoulders swathed in a crisp sprigged muslin, sat circumspectly under the brisk shears of Bert Woods. Bert hovered above him and commented on yesterday's fiasco. "It comes to the best of 'em," Bert assured him: "'member how Ollie Stitcher fell down in the world's series at Chicago." He recited, for Anthony's comfort, the names of eminent pitchers who had "fell down" when every necessity demanded that they should remain splendidly erect.

His defeat still rankled in Anthony's mind, but the bitterness had vanished, the hurt salved by that other memory of the impulsive charm of Eliza Dreen. He recalled all that she had said to him. Her words, thoughtfully considered, were just those employed by humdrum individ-

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uals in their commonplace discourses; but, spoken by her, they were athrill with a special, a significant importance and beauty. It was inevitable that she should have dreamed things immaculate, rare; things like . . . white flowers.

"Shampoo?" Bert inquired absent-mindedly.

"*And* singed, and curled, and sprinkled with violets," Anthony promptly returned. With a flourish, Bert swept aside the muslin folds.

Then, in the pursuit of a neglected duty, he crossed the town to a quiet corner, occupied by a small dwelling built of smooth green stone, crowned with a fantastic and dingy froth of wood. A shallow, untended garden was choked with weeds and bushes, sprawling upward against closely-shuttered windows. He realized with a stir of mild self-reproach that he had not been to see Mrs. Bosbyshell for two weeks. He was aware that his visits to that solitary and eccentric old woman formed her sole contact with a world which she regarded with an increasing, unbalanced suspicion.

A minute or more after his knock—the bell

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handle was missing—a shutter shifted a fraction, upon which he was admitted to a narrow, dark hall, and the door bolted sharply behind him. A short, stout woman, in a formless wrap of grotesquely gorgeous design, faced him with a quivering, apprehensive countenance and prodigiously bright eyes. Her scant, yellowish-white hair was gathered aloft in a knot that slipped oddly from side to side; and, as she walked, shabby Juliet slippers loudly slapped the bare floor.

“Do you want some wood brought in?” Anthony inquired; “and how does the washer I put on the hot water spigot work?”

“A little wood, if you please; and the spigot’s good as new.” She sat on a chair, lifting a harassed gaze to his serious solicitation. “I’ve had a dreadful time since you were here last—an evilish-appearing man knocked and knocked, at one door and again at another.” Her voice sank to a shrill whisper. “He was after the money.” She nodded so vigorously that the knot fell in a straggling wisp across her eyes. “Cousin Alonzo sent him.”

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"Your cousin Alonzo has been dead ten years," he interposed patiently, going once more over that familiar ground. "Probably it was a man wanting to sell gas stoves."

"You don't know Alonzo," she persisted, unconvinced; "I should have to see his corp'. He knows I've a comfortable sum put by, and's hard after it for his wenching and such practices: small good, or bad, he'll get of it when my will comes to be read."

He passed through the hall to the kitchen, and, unchaining the back door, brought a basket of cut wood from a shed and piled it beside the stove. Mrs. Bosbyshell inspected with a critical eye the fastening of the door. There was a swollen window sash to release above, a mattress to turn, then he was waved ceremoniously into a formal, darkened chamber. The musty spice of rose potpourri lingered in the flat air; old mahogany—rush-bottomed chairs, a flute-legged table, a highboy and Dutch clock—glimmered about the walls. A marble-topped stand bore orderly volumes in maroon and primrose morocco, the

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top one entitled, "The Gentlewoman's Garland. A Gift Book."

From a triangular cupboard she produced a decanter with a carved design of bees and cobalt clover, and a plate of crumbling currant cake.

"A sup of dandelion cordial," she announced, "a bite of sweet. Growing boys must be fed."

She sat, and with patent satisfaction watched Anthony consume the ropy sirup and cake.

"I met a girl last night," he told her intimately; "she had hair like—like a Roman candle."

"Did you burn your heart up in it?"

"She told me that I was like the early morning," he confided with a rush.

Mrs. Bosbyshell nodded her approval. "An understandable remark; exactly what I should have said fifty years ago; I didn't know the girls of to-day had it in 'em. You've got a good heart, Anthony," she enunciated. Anthony shuffled his feet. "A good heart is a rare thing to find in the young. But I misdoubt, in a world of mammon, you'll pay for it dear; I'm afraid you

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will never be successful, so called. It's selling men that success is got, and buying women, and it's never in you to do those. *You* wouldn't wish an old woman gone for the sum she'd laid aside."

Her fancies had been wilder than usual, he concluded, as the bolt of the door at his back slid home. Alonzo and her money—the one he considered as actual, as imminent, as the other—occupied to the exclusion of all else her dimming brain. He had hoped to converse with her more fully on the inexhaustible subject of Eliza Dreen, but her vagaries had interrupted him continually. He decided that she was an antiquated bore, but made a mental note to return before the store of wood was consumed.

XI

IN the evening he stopped from force of habit at Doctor Allhop's drugstore. The familiar group was assembled behind the screen at the rear, the conversation flowed in the old channels. Anthony lounged and listened, but his attention continually wandered—he heard other, more musical tones; his vision was filled with a candid face and widely-opened eyes in the green gloom of a pergola. He passed out of the bevy at the soda-water fountain to the street.

In the artificial day of the electric lights the early summer foliage was as virulently green as the toy trees of a miniature ark; the sky was a breathless vault filled with blue mists that veiled the stars; under the locust trees the blooms were spilled odorously, whitely, on the pavement. He walked aimlessly to the outskirts of the town. Across the dim valley, against the hills merged

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into the night and sky, he could see the low glimmering lights of Hydrangea House. It would be pleasant, he thought, to be closer to that abode of delight; and, crossing the road, he vaulted a fence and descended through a tangle of aromatic grass to the brook that threaded the meadow below. A star swam imaged on the black, wrinkled surface of the water: it suggested vague, happy images—Eliza was the star, and he was the brook, holding her mirrored in his dreams.

He passed cows, blowing softly into the sod; a flock of sheep broke before him like an argent cloud on the heaven of the fields; and, finally, he reached the boundary of James Dreen's acres. He forced his way through the budding hedge from which the place had its name, and, in a cup of the lawn like a pool of brimming, fragrant shadows, sat watching the lights of the house.

Indistinct shapes passed the windows, each—since it might be she—carrying to him a thrill; indistinguishable voices reached him, the vague tones—they might be hers—chiming like bells on his straining senses. The world, life, was so

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beautiful that it brought an obstruction into his throat; he drew the back of his hand across his eyes, and, to his surprise, found that it was wet.

Presently, the lights sank on the lower floor and reappeared above. The blinding whiteness of the thought of Eliza sleeping seared his brain like a flare of powder. When the house retreated unrelieved into the gloom he rose and slowly retraced his steps. He lit a cigarette; the match burned with a steady flame in the stillness; but, in an unnamed impulse, he flung both aside, and filled his lungs with the Elysian June air.

XII

THE next afternoon, returning from the unloading of a grain car at his father's warehouse, he discovered a smartly saddled horse fast to the marble hitching post before his door. It hardly required the glance at the silver "D" on the headstall to inform him who was within. He found Ellie and Eliza Dreen in the corner by the Canton tea service, consuming Pekoe and gingerbread dicky birds. Eliza nodded and smiled over her shoulder, and resumed an animated projection of an excursion in canoes on the Wino-hocking. She wore a severe coat over white breeches and immaculate boots with diminutive gold spurs. Beneath a flat straw hat her hair was confined by a broad ribband low upon her neck, and a pink stock was held in position by a gaily-checked waistcoat.

Anthony dropped with affected ease on the sofa, and covertly studied the delicate line of her cheek. He now recalled indignantly that Mrs.

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Dreen had said Eliza was not good-looking; while her reference to Eliza's veracity had been entirely superfluous. She turned toward him, finally, with an engaging query. He saw across her nose a faint trail of the most delightful freckles in the world; her eyes were blue, that amazing blue of bachelor's buttons; and her mouth—he would have sworn this the first time such simile had been applied to that feature—was like a roseleaf. He made a totally inadequate reply, while Ellie rose, and, plate in hand, vanished in quest of a fresh supply of gingerbread. A sort of desperate, blundering courage took possession of him:

"I have been thinking a lot about you," he told her. "Last night I sat on your grass and wondered which was your window."

"What a silly!—we were on the porch all evening."

"It wasn't that I wanted to talk to you so much," he tried to explain his instinctive impulses, desires, "as just to be near you."

"I think," she said slowly, "yes, I know—that

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is the prettiest thing that has ever been said to me. I thought about you . . . a little; really more about myself. I haven't recognized myself at all very lately; I suppose it's being home again." She gazed at him candidly, critically. "You have very unusual eyes," she remarked unexpectedly; "they are so transparent. Haven't you *anything* to hide?"

"Some chicken feathers," he affirmed. He grew serious immediately. "Your eyes are like—like—" the name of the flower so lately suggested by her lucid vision had flown his mind. Suspenders, bachelor's suspenders, exclusively occurred to him. "An awfully blue flower," he temporized.

She crossed the room, and bent over the tea roses, freshly placed in the jar by the door. "I must go," she said, her back to him. "I have been here a terrific length of time . . . I thought perhaps you'd come in. . . . Wasn't it shocking of me?"

The knowledge that she had considered the possibility of seeing him filled Anthony with incredu-

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lous joy. Then, sitting silently, gazing fixedly at the floor, he became acutely miserable at the sudden conviction of his worthlessness; shame prevented him from looking at her—surely she must see that he, Anthony Ball, the unsuccessful, without prospect, the truant from life, was an improper object for her interest. She was so absolutely desirable, so fine.

He recalled what she had said on the night of the dance . . . about constancy: if the single devotion of his life would mean anything to her, he continued grandiloquently, it was hers. He was considering the possibility of telling her this when Ellie unnecessarily returned with a replenished plate. He was grateful when neither included him in the remarks which followed. And he speedily left the room, proceeding to the pavement, where he stood with his palm resting on the flank of her horse.

In the slanting rays of the sun the street was a way of gold; when Eliza appeared she was ringed in the molten glory. She placed her heel in his hand, and sprang lightly into the saddle; the

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horse shied, there was a clatter of hoofs, and she cantered away. Ellie stood on the steps, graceful, unconcerned; he watched until the upright mounted figure was out of sight, then silently passed his sister into the house.

XIII

HE was in his room when the familiar formula of a whistled signal sounded from the darkened street. It was Alfred Craik; he recognized the halt ending of the bar; he whistled like an old hinge, Anthony thought impatiently. He proceeded to the lawn, and called shortly over the crumbling iron fence. Alfred Craik was agog with weighty information.

"The circus is coming in at three-thirty to-morrow morning," he announced. "The station agent told me . . . old Giller's lot on Newberry Street. 'Member last year we had breakfast with the elephant trainer!"

Circuses, Anthony told him with large unconcern, were for infantile minds; they might put their circus on top the Court House without winning the slightest notice from him; the horses were no better than old cows; and as for clowns, the ringmaster, they made him specifically ill.

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The greater part of this diatribe Alfred chose to ignore; he impatiently besought Anthony to "come off" and warned him strenuously against a tardy waking. Once more in his room, Anthony smiled at the other's pretty enthusiasm. Yet at half past three he woke sharply, starting up on his elbow as though he had been called. He heard in the distance the faint, shrill whistle of the locomotive drawing the circus into Ellerton. He sank back, but, with the face of Eliza radiant against the gloom, slumber deserted him. It occurred to him that he might, after all, rise and witness from his rarer elevation the preparations that had once aroused in him such immature joy.

The circus ground was an apparently inexplicable tangle of canvas and lumber, threaded with men like unsubstantial hurrying shadows. At the fence corner loomed the vague bulks of elephants, heaving ceaselessly, stamping with the dull clank of chains; a line of cages beyond was still indistinguishable. The confusion seemed hopeless—the hasty, desperate labor at the edges of the billowing grey canvas, the virulent curses

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as feet slipped in the torn sod, the shrill, passionate commands, resembled an inferno of ineffectual toil for shades condemned to never-ending labor. The tent rose slowly, hardly detached from the thin morning gloom, and the hammering of stakes uprose with a sharp, furious energy. A wagonload of hay creaked into the lot; a horse whinnied; and from a cage sounded a long-drawn, despondent howl. The fusillade of hammering, the ringing of boards, increased. A harried and indomitable voice maintained an insistent grip upon the clamor. It grew lighter; pinched features emerged, haggard individuals in haphazard garbs stood with the sweat glistening on their blue brows.

The elephants, tearing apart a bale of hay, appeared ancient beyond all computation, infinitely patient, infinitely weary. Out of the sudden crimson that stained the east a ray of sunlight flashed like a pointed, accusing finger and rested on the garish, gilded bars and tarnished fringe of the cages; it hit the worn and dingy fur of an aged, gaunt lioness, the dim and bleared topaz of her eyes blinking against the flood of day; it

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fell upon a pair of lean wolves trotting in a quick, constricted circle; upon a ragged hyena with a dry and uplifted snout; upon a lithe leopard with a glittering green gaze of unquenchable hate.

“Take a hold,” a husky voice had urged Anthony; “help the circus men put up the big tent, and get a free pass.” In the contagion of work he had pulled upon the hard canvas, the stiff ropes that cut like scored iron, and held stakes to be driven into the slushy sod. Thin shoulders strained against his own, gasping and maculate breaths assailed him. The flesh was torn from a man’s palm; another, hit a glancing blow on the head with a mall, wandered about dazed, falling over ropes, blundering in paths of hasty brutality.

Anthony rested with aching muscles in the orient flood of the sun. The tent was erected, flags fluttered gaily aloft, the posters of the side show flung their startling colors abroad. A musical call floated upward from an invisible bugle: an air of gala, of triumphant and irresponsible pleasure, permeated the scene. “She’s all right,

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isn't she?" Alfred Craik demanded at his side. He nodded silently, and turned toward home, his pulses leaping with joy at the dewy freshness of the morning, the knowledge of Eliza—a sparkling, singing optimism drawn from the unstained fountain of his youth.

XIV

ATER, engaged in repairing a shelf—at a super-union scale—for his mother, he heard the steam shriek of a calliope announcing the parade. From a window he could see the thronged sidewalks, the crudely fantastic figures of the clowns, enveloped in a dusty haze of light. His thoughts withdrew from that vapid spectacle to the rapt contemplation of Eliza Dreen. He pictured Eliza and himself in the dramatic situations which diversified the moving pictures of his nightly attendance: he rescued her from the wiles of Mexicans, counts, weirdly-wicked Hindoos; now he dragged her from the chimney into which she had been bricked by a Brotherhood of Blood; now, driving a monoplane above the hurtling express that bore her toward a fiendish revenge, he descended to halt the train at a river's brink while the bridge sank dynamited into the swirling

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stream—"Mercy, Tony!" his mother's practical voice rent the resplendent vision; "don't crush your great-uncle's epaulets."

After the midday meal a minute review of the places where Eliza might be found discovered the Ellerton Country Club to hold the greatest possibility. Anthony was a virtual stranger to that focus of the newer Ellerton; except for the older enthusiasts who played golf every afternoon that it was humanly possible to remain outside, it was the stronghold of the species Anthony had encountered in the dressing room at the Dreenes' dance. The space at the back of the drugstore, where he had lounged, held unbroken the elder tradition of Ellerton. There he had cultivated a mild contempt for the studied urbanity, the formally organized converse and games, of the club. But as a setting for Eliza it gained a compelling attraction. And, in his freshly-ironed flannels, he ordered his steps toward that goal. The Club House overhung the rolling green of the golf links; from a place of vantage he saw that Eliza was not on the veranda; at one end a group of

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young men were drinking—tea! Beyond, his father and three companions, followed by caddies, rose above a hill. His father grasped a club and bent over the turf; the club described a short arc, the ball flashed whitely through the air, and the group trotted eagerly forward, mingling explanation, chagrin, and prediction with heated and simple sums in arithmetic.

Then he saw Eliza . . . she was on the tennis court, playing with a vigorous girl with a bare and stalwart forearm. He divined that the latter was winning, and conceived a sweeping distaste for her flushed, perspiring countenance and thickset ankles. “How beautiful you look!” Eliza called, as he propped himself against the wire netting that, overrun with honeysuckle, enclosed the courts. He watched her fleeting form, heard her breathless exclamations, with warm stirs of delight. When her opponent played the ball beyond her reach his dislike for that efficiency became an obsession. The flying shadows lengthened on the rolled yellow surface of the court; the group on the porch emptied their teacups and

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moved away; and the final set of games was won by the “beefsteak.”

Eliza slipped into a formless chocolate-colored coat: racket in hand, she smiled at him. “I’m rather done,” she admitted. She hesitated, then: “I wonder—are you doing anything?—if you would drive me home?” He assured her upon that point with a celerity that brought a momentary confusion upon them. “The Meadowbrook and roan at the sheds,” she directed. In the basketlike cart they swung easily over the road toward Hydrangea House. Checked relentlessly into a walk, the roan stepped in a dainty fume.

Eliza’s countenance was as tenderly hued as the pearly haze that overlay the far hills; faint mauve shadows deepened the blueness of her eyes; her mouth, slightly parted, held the fragile pink of coral; a tinge of weariness upon her bore an infinite appeal—her relaxed, drooping body filled him with a gusty longing to put his arms about her shoulders and hold her secure against all fatigue, against the assaults of time itself.

He had never before driven such an impatient

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and hasty animal; at the slightest slackening of the reins the horse broke into a sharp trot; and, beyond doubt, he could walk faster than any other brute alive. Already they were at the entrance to the driveway; the house appeared to hurry forward to intercept them. Eliza pressed a button, and a man crossed the grass to the roan's head. They descended, and she lingered on the steps with a murmur of gratitude. "Mrs. Dreen telephoned Ranke to meet the eight-forty," a servant in the doorway replied to Eliza's query. "She's having dinner in town with Mr. Dreen."

Eliza turned with a gesture of appeal. "Save me from a solitary pudding," she petitioned Anthony. "You can go back with Ranke. . . . On the porch, such fun—father detests candles." Any expression of his acceptance he felt to be an absurd formality. "Then if you can amuse yourself," she announced, "I'll vanish for a little . . . cigars in the library and victrola in the hall."

He crossed the sod to the porch on the other face of the house, and sat watching the day fade

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from the valley below. A violet blur of smoke overhung the chimney of the Ellerton Waterworks, printed thinly on the sky. A sense of detachment from that familiar scene enveloped him—the base-ball field, the defunct garage, places and details, customary, normal, retreated into the distance, it seemed into the past, gathering upon the horizon of his thoughts as the roofs of Ellerton huddled beyond the hills, vanishing into shadows that inexorably deepened, blotted out the old aspects, stilled the accustomed voices and sounds of his uncomplicated youth.

A servant appeared and, placing a table upon the tiles, spread a blanched cloth, gleaming crystal and silver. A low bowl of shadowy wood violets was ranged in the center, and hooded candles cast over the table, the flowers, a pale, auriferous pool of light in the purpling dusk. When Eliza followed, in filmy white, she seemed half materialized from the haunting vision of poignant beauty at the back of his brain. She was like moonlight, still and yet disturbing, veiled in illusion, in strange, ethereal influences that set a thrill within

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him emotions immaterial, potent, snowy longing for which he had no name.

The last plate removed, Anthony stirred his coffee in a state of dreamy happiness. The candlelight spread a wan gold veil over Eliza's delicate countenance; it slid over the pearls about her slim throat and fell upon her fragile wrists. "It's been wonderful," he pronounced solemnly.

"I've been terribly rude," she told him; "I have hardly spoken. I have been busy studying you."

"There's not much to study," he disclaimed; "Mrs. Bosbyshell thinks I'm marked for failure." In reply to her demand he gave a brief and diffident account of that eccentric old woman. "But," Eliza discerned among the meager details, "she trusts you, she lets you into her house. And you are perfect to her, of course."

"Any one could trust you, I think. Yet you are not a particle tiresome; most trustworthy people are so—so unexciting. But monotony is as far as possible from your vicinity. What did you do, for instance, this morning?"

He described to her the advent of the circus, the

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labor in the obscurity. "I was surprised to see the old thing up," he ended. "It seemed so hopeless at first."

"How wonderfully poetic!" she cried.

Until that moment poetry had occupied a place analogous to tea in his thoughts. In his brief passage through the last school he had been forcibly fed with Gray's Elegy, discovering it unmitigated and sickening rot. But now, in view of her obvious pleasure, he should have to reconsider his judgment.

"That blind effort," she continued, leaning forward, flushed with the warmth of her image, "all those men struggling, building in the dark, unable to see what they were accomplishing, or what part the others had. And then—oh! don't you see!—the great, snowy tent in the morning sun—a figure of the success, the reward, of all labor, all living."

"How about the ones that loafed—didn't pull, or were drunk?"

"For all," she insisted, "sober and drunk and shrinking. Can you think that any supreme judgment would be cheaply material, or in need

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of any of our penny abilities? do you suppose the supreme beauty has no standard higher than those practical minds that hold out heaven as a sort of reward for washed faces? "Anthony"—it was the first time she had called him that, and it rang in his brain in a long peal of rapture—"if there isn't a heaven for every one, there isn't any at all. You, singing an idle song, must be as valuable as the greatest apostle, to any supreme love—or else, it isn't supreme, it isn't love."

"You are so wonderfully good," he muttered, "that you think every one else is good too."

"But I'm hardly a bit good," she assured him, "and I wouldn't be good if I could—in the Christian kind of way." She gazed about with an affectionation of secretiveness, then leaned across her coffee cup. "It would bore me horribly," she confided, "that 'other cheek' thing; I'm not a grain humble; and I spend a criminal amount of money on my clothes. I have even put a patch upon my cheek to be a gin and stumbling-block to a young man."

She had!

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He surveyed with absurd pleasure that minute black crescent on the pale rose of her countenance. If she had been good before, she was adorable now: her confession had drawn her out of the resplendent cloud, to which he had elevated her, down to his side; she was infinitely more desirable, more warmly and delightfully human.

"I have been asking about you," she told him later, with a slight frown; "the accounts are, well —various. I don't mind your—your friends of the stables, Anthony; they are, what Ellerton will never learn, the careless choice of a born aristocrat; I don't care a Tecla pearl whether you are 'a steady young man' or not. And one doesn't hear a whisper of meanness about you anywhere. But I have an exaggerated affection for things that are beautiful—I suppose it's a weakness, really—and ugly people or surroundings, harsh voices even, terrify me. The possibility of cruelty makes me cold. And, since you will come into my thoughts, and smile your funny little smile at me out of walls and other impossible places, I should like to picture you, not in pool rooms, but

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on the hills that you know so well. I should like to think of your mind echoing with the rush of those streams, the hunting of those owls, you told me about, and not sounding with coarse and silly and brutal words and ideas."

"It echoes with you," he replied, "and you are more beautiful than hills and streams."

For a moment she held his gaze full in the blue depths of her vision; then, with a troubled smile, evaded it. "I'm a patched jade," she announced.

Ranke, the servant informed them, was ready to meet the train.

"You're going . . . Ellie's affair on the Wingohocking?"

"Absolutely." She stood elusive against the saffron blur of the candles, the sweeping hem of night.

"I'll remember," he blundered; "whatever you would wish . . . you have changed everything. The dinner was—I don't remember what it was," he confessed. "But I remember an olive."

He left the automobile at the edge of Ellerton, and proceeded on foot, passing the dully shining

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bulk of the circus tent. He heard the brassy dissonance of the band within, the monotonous thud of horses' hoofs on the tanbark; a raucous voice rose at the entrance to the side show, dwelling unctuously on the monstrosities to be viewed within for the price of a dime, of a dime, a dime. He recalled the spent lioness in her painted cage, the haggard and sick hyena, the abject trot of the wolves to nowhere. A sudden exhalation of hatred swept over him for the hideous inhumanity of circuses and men. Eliza had lifted him from the meaningless babble of trivial and hard voices into a high and immaculate region of shining space and quietude. He didn't want to come down again, he protested, to *this*.

XV

ANTHONY passed the few intervening days till the excursion on the Wingohocking in a state of rapt absorption. His brain sounded with every tone of Eliza's voice; she smiled at him, in riding garb, over that delicate trail of freckles; he saw her in the misty amber dress of the dance; in white, illusively lit by the candles against the shadowy veranda. Now, for the first time, days that had succeeded haphazardly to days, without relation or plan, were strung together, bound into an intelligible whole, by the thread of romance. He must get a firm grip upon reality, construct a solid existence out of the unsubstantial elements of his living; but, in his new felicity, he was unable to direct his thoughts to details inevitably sordid; he was lost in the miracle of Eliza Dreen's mere presence; material considerations might, must, be deferred a short while longer.

A stainless afternoon sky overspread finally the

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group gathered about covered willow baskets on the green bank of the stream. Behind them the meadows swept level, reflecting the flood of the sun with a blaze of aureate flowers to a silver band of birch; the upstream reach, wrinkled and dark, was lost between tangles of wild grapes; below, with a smooth, virid rush, the water poured and broke over rocky shallows.

Anthony launched his canoe from a point of crystalline sand and, holding it against the bank, gazed covertly at Eliza. She was once more in white, with a broad apple-green ribband about her waist: she stood above him, slenderly poised against the sky; she was so rare, he thought, so ethereal, that she seemed capable of floating off into the blue. Then he bent, hastily rearranging a cushion, for she was descending toward him. He stepped skillfully after her into the craft, and they drifted silently over the surface of the stream. A thrust of the paddle, in a swirl of white bubbles, turned them about, and they advanced steadily against the sliding current.

The still, watery facsimile of the banks was

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broken into liquid blots of emerald and bronze by the bow of the canoe. The air rose coldly from the surface to Anthony's face; from the meadows on either hand came the light, dry fragrance of newly-cut hay; before them trees, meeting above, formed a somber reach, barred with dusty gold shafts of sunlight that sank into the clear depths. He heard behind the distant dip of paddles, the floating voices, worlds removed.

Eliza trailed her hand in the water. An idyllic silence, which he was loath to break, folded them. . . . He had rolled up his sleeves, and the muscles of his forearms swelled rhythmically under the clear brown skin.

"You are preposterously strong," she approved. His elation, however, collapsed at the condition following. "But strength is simply brutality until it's wisely directed. Mazzini and not Napoleon was my ideal in history."

Who, he wondered unhappily, was Mazzini? "I hated school," he told her briefly. "I don't believe I have ever read a book through; I'd rather paddle about—with *you*."

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"But you have read deep in the book of nature," she reassured him. "Only a very favorite few open those pages. You are such a child," she added obliquely, "appallingly unsophisticated: that's what's nicest about you, really."

That form of laudation left him cold, and he drove the canoe with a vicious rush against the reflections. "A dear child," she added, without materially increasing his pleasure.

"Words are *rot!*!" he exploded suddenly; "they can't say any of the important things. I could talk a year to you without telling you what I feel—here." He laid a hand momentarily on his spare, powerful chest. "It's all mixed up, like lead and fire; or that feeling when ice cream goes to your head. You see," he ended moodily—"all rot."

"It's very picturesque . . . and apparently painful. Words aren't necessary for the truly important things, Anthony."

"Then you know—what I think of you; you know . . . how everything else has moved away and left only you; you know a hundred things, all important, all about yourself."

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She set an uncertain smile against the torrent of his words. The stream narrowed between high banks drawn against the sheer deeps of sky; the water flowed swiftly, with a sustained whisper at the edges, and, for a silent space, he paddled vigorously. Then a dark, glassy pool opened, sodded bluely to the shores, with low, silvery clumps of willows casting sooty shadows across the vert water; and, with a sharp twist, he beached the canoe with a soft shock upon the shelving pebbles. As he held the craft steady he felt the light, thrilling impact of Eliza's palm as she sprang ashore.

The others followed rapidly. The canoes were drawn out of the water, and preparations for supper began. Eliza and Ellie Ball, accompanied by a youth with a pail, proceeded to a neighboring farmhouse in quest of milk. Anthony lingered at the water's edge, ignoring the appeal for firewood. The glow of the westering sun faded from the air, and the reflection of the fire lighted behind him danced ruddy on the grass. At intervals small fish splashed invisibly, and a kingfisher

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cried downstream. Then he heard his sister's voice, and a familiar and moving perfume hovered in his nostrils. He turned and saw Eliza with her arms full of white lilacs. Her loveliness left him breathless; mingled with the low sun, it blinded him. She seemed all made of misty bloom—a fragrant spirit of ineffable flowers. The scent of the lilacs stirred profound, inarticulate emotions within him, like the poignant impression left by a forgotten dream of shivering delight.

He scorned the fare soon spread on the clothed sod, burning his throat stoically with a cup of unsweetened coffee. Eliza sat beyond the charring remains of the fire, sinking from cherry-red embers to impalpable white ash. He observed with secret satisfaction that she too ate little: he felt that an appetite on her part would have been a calamity.

The meadows and distant woods were vague against the primrose west, the cyanite curtain of the east, when the baskets were assembled for the return. Anthony delayed over the arrangement

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of his craft until Eliza and himself were last in the floating procession. Dense shadows, drooping from the trees, filled the banks; overhead the sky was clear green. They swept silently forward with the current and a rare dip of the paddle. Eliza's countenance was just palely visible. The lilacs lay in a pallid heap at their feet. On either hand the world floated back darkly like an immaterial void through which a silver stream bore them beyond the stars.

At a bend he reached up and caught hold of an overhanging branch, and they swung into a shallow backwater. A deep shelf of stone lay under the face of the bank, closed in by a network of wildgrape stems. "This is where I sometimes stay at night," he told her; "no one knows but you."

XVI

SHE rose and, without warning, stepped out upon the rock. "Here's where you build your fire," she cried at the discovery of a blackened heap of ashes. He secured the canoe and followed her. "Ideal," she breathed. The sound of the fall below was faintly audible; the quavering cry of an owl, the beating of heavy wings, rose above the bank. "Don't you envy the old pastoral people following their flocks from land to land, setting up their tents by streams like this, waking with the dawn on the world? or Gipsies . . . you must read 'Lavengro.' "

"I don't envy any one on God's little globe," he asserted; "to be here with you is the best thing possible."

"Something more desirable would soon occur to you."

"Than you!" he protested; "than you!"

"But people get tired of what they have."

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"It's what they don't have that makes them old and tired," he told her with sudden prescience. "When I think of what I am going to lose, of what I can never have, it makes me crazy."

"Why do you say that? . . . How can you know?"

She was standing close to him in the constricted space, the tangible shock of her nearness sweeping over him in waves of heady emotion. The water gurgling by the rock was the only sound in a world-stillness.

"I mean you."

"Well, I'm not fairy gold; I'm not the end of the rainbow. I am just Eliza."

"Just Eliza!" he scoffed. Then the possibility contained in her words struck him dumb. The feeling irresistibly returned that, because of her heavenly ignorance, her charity, she mistook him to be worthy. The necessity to guard her from her own divinity impelled him to repeat, miserably, all that she had ignored.

"I'm not much account," he said laboriously. "You see, I never stuck at anything, and, some-

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how, things have never stuck to me. It was that way at school—I was expelled from four. I'm supposed to be shiftless."

"I don't care in the least for that!" she declared; "only one thing is really important to me . . . something, oh, so different." Suddenly she laid her hand upon his sleeve, and, pitifully white, faced him. "I've had the beautifullest feeling about you," she whispered. "Anthony, tell me truly, are you . . . good?"

A sob rose uncontrollably in his throat, and his eyes filled with tears that spilled over his cheeks. For a moment he struggled to check them, then, unashamed, slipped on his knees before her and held her tightly in his arms. "No one in the world can say that I am not—what you mean."

She stooped, and sat beside him on the stone, holding his hand close to her slight body. "My dream," she said simply. "I didn't understand it at first; you see, I was only a child. And then when I grew older, and—and heard things, it seemed impossible. That sort of goodness only bored other girls . . . they liked men of the

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world, men with a past. I thought perhaps I was only morbid, and lost trust in—in you."

"It was a kind of accident," he admitted. "I never thought about it the way you did. It seemed young to me, and I put up a bluff that I was wise."

"I don't believe it was an accident in the least," she insisted. A mist rose greyly from the darker surface of the stream, and settled cold and clammy about Anthony's face. It drew about them in wavering garlands, growing steadily denser. Eliza was sitting now pressed against him, and he felt a shiver run through her. "You are cold!" he cried instantly, and rose, lifting her to her feet. She smiled, in his arms, and he bent down and kissed her. She clung to him with a deep sigh, and met his lips steadily with her own. The mist slipped like a veil over Eliza's head, and drops of moisture shone in her hair. Anthony turned and unfastened the canoe; and, suddenly conscious of the length of their delay, he urged it with long sweeps over the stream. Beyond the lilacs, distilling their potent sweetness in the dark,

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Eliza was motionless, silent, a flicker of white in the gloom.

They swept almost immediately into the broad reach where they had started. The lights from the windows of a boat house, the voices of the others, streamed gaily over the water. He felt Eliza tremble as he lifted her ashore.

"It's happiness," she told him; "I am ever so warm inside."

XVII

THE following day he discovered by his plate at the luncheon table a small lavender envelope, stamped and addressed to Anthony Ball, Esq. He slipped it hastily into his pocket, and managed but a short-lived pretext of eating. Then, with the letter yet unopened, he left Ellerton, and penetrated into the heart of the countryside.

He stopped, finally, under a fence that crossed a hill, on a slope of wild strawberries. The hill fell away in an unbroken sweep of undulating blue-green wheat; trees filled the hollow, with a roof and thread of silver water drawn through the close leaves; on either hand chocolate loam bore the tender ripple of young corn; and beyond, crossed by the shifting shadows of slow-drifting clouds, hill and wood and pasture spread a mellow mosaic of summer.

He tore open the envelope with a reluctant de-

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light. At the top of the sheet E D was stamped severely in mauve. "My very dear," he read. He stopped, suddenly unable to proceed; the countryside swam in his vision; he gulped an ecstatic, convulsive breath, and proceeded:

"It's too wonderful—I can't realize that you exist, and that I have found you in such a great world. Isn't it strange how real dreams are; just now the real world seems the dream, and my dear home, my mother, shadows compared to the thoughts that fill my brain of you, you, you.

"But I am writing mostly to tell you something that, perhaps, you didn't fully understand yesterday—and yet I think you must have—that, if you really want me, I am absolutely your own. I couldn't help it if I wanted to, and, oh, I don't want to! I let a man at Etretat kiss me, and I am glad I did, for it made me understand that I must wait for you.

"I won't write any more now because my head aches. From Eliza who loves you utterly." Then he saw that she had written on the following page: "Don't worry about money and the

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future; I have my own, all we shall need for years, and we can do something together."

He laid the letter beside him on the grass. The welling song of a catbird sounded unsupportably sweet, and a peaceful column of smoke rose bluely from the chimney below: it carried him in imagination to a dwelling set in a still, green garden, where birds filled the branches with melody, and Eliza and himself walked hand in hand and kissed. Night would gather in about their joy, their windows would shine with the golden lamp of their seclusion, their voices mingle . . . sink . . . sacred.

He dreamed for a long while; the sunlight vanished from the slope below him, from the darkling trees, touched only the farthest hills with a rosy glow. As the sun sank, an errant air whispered in the wheat and scattered the pungent aroma of the wild strawberries. A voice called thinly from the swales, and cows gathered indistinctly about a gate. Anthony rose. The world was one vast harmony in which he struck the highest, happiest note. Beyond the near hills the

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lilac glitter of the Ellerton lights sprang palely up on the blue dusk. As he made his way home, Anthony's brain teemed with delightful projects, with anticipation, the thought of the house in the hollow—abode of love, steeped in night.

XVIII

ELLIE was in the garden, and interrupted his progress toward a belated dinner. "Father wants to see you," she called; "at the Club, of course." He wondered absently, approaching the Club, what his father wanted. The rooms occupied the second story of the edifice that housed the administration of the county; the main corridor was choked by a crowd that moved noisily toward an auditorium in the rear, but the Club was silent, save for the click of invisible billiard balls.

His father was asleep in the reading room, a newspaper spread upon his knees and one thin hand twisted in his beard. Through an open window drifted the strains of a band on the Court House lawn. The older man woke, clearing his throat sharply. "Well, Anthony," he nodded. Anthony found a chair.

His father leaned forward, regarding him with

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a keen, kindly gaze. "I'm told the garage has gone up," he began.

"Sam took his car away; it was Alfred's infernal tinkering; he can't let a machine alone."

"Did you close affairs satisfactorily, stop solvent?"

"There's a little debt of about six dollars."

The other sought his wallet and, removing a rubber band, counted six dollars into Anthony's hand. "Meet that in the morning." He leaned back, tapping the wallet with deliberate fingers: "I suppose you have no plan for the immediate future."

"Nothing right now."

"I have one for you, though, as 'right now' as this week."

Anthony listened respectfully, his mind still dwelling upon the beauty of the dusk without, of life. "You have tried a number of things in the past few years without success. I have started you in a small way again and again, only to observe the familiar course of a failure inevitable from your shiftless habits. You are not a bad

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boy, but you have no ability to concentrate, like a stream spread all over the meadow—you have no course. You're a loiterer."

"Yes, sir," said Anthony, from the midst of his abstraction.

"You are too old for that now; either it must stop at once, or you will become definitely worthless. I am going to make a determined effort—I am going to send you to California. Your brother-in-law writes that he can give you something."

The term "California" sounded in Anthony's brain like the unexpected clash of an immense bell. It banished his pleasant reverie in disordered shreds, filling him with sudden dismay.

"I telegraphed Albert yesterday," the even tones continued, "and have his answer in my pocket. You are to go out to him immediately."

"But that's impossible," Anthony interrupted; "it just can't be done."

"Why not?"

He found himself completely at a loss to give adequate expression to his reason for remaining

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in Ellerton. His joy was so new that he had scarcely formulated it to himself; it evaded words, defied definition—it was a thing of dreams, a vision in a shining garment, a fountain of life at the bottom of his heart.

“Come; why not?”

“I don’t want to go away from Ellerton . . . just now.”

“That is precisely what you must do. I can understand your desire to remain close by your mother—she has an excuse for you, assistance, at every turn.”

“That isn’t the reason; it’s . . . it’s”—he bogged horribly—“a girl.”

“Indeed,” his father remarked dryly.

Anthony shrank painfully from the unsympathetic voice of the elder. A new defiance of his father welled hotly within him, corrupting the bonds of discipline that had held him lovingly to his parent throughout the past. A chasm opened between them; and, when Anthony spoke again, it was with a voice of incipient insubordination.

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"It isn't the silly stuff you think," he told the other; "I'm engaged!"

"What on?" pithily came the inquiry. "Unfortunately I can't afford the luxury of a daughter-in-law. I believed you were something more of a man than to bring your wife into your mother's house."

"I sha'n't; we can get along until I . . . find work."

"Do you mean that your wife will support you?"

"Not altogether; she will help until—until—" He stopped miserably before the anger confronting him in the other's gaze: it was useless to explain, he thought; but if his father laughed at him, at his love, he would leave the room and never see him again. "I can't see why money is so damned holy!" he broke out; "why it matters so infernally where it comes from; it seems to me only a dirty detail."

"It is the measure of a man's honor," the elder Ball told him inexorably; "how it is made or got stamps you in the world. I am surprised

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to hear that you would even consider taking it from a woman, surprised and hurt. It shows all the more clearly the necessity for your going at once into a hard, healthy existence. Your mother will get you ready; a couple of days should do it."

"... all unexpected," Anthony muttered; "I must think about it, see some one. I'll—I'll talk to you to-morrow. That's it," he enunciated more hopefully, "to-morrow—"

"Entirely unnecessary," his father interposed; "nothing to be gained by delay or further talk. The thing's arranged."

"I think I won't go," Anthony told him slowly. The other picked up the paper, smoothing out the creases. "Very well," he replied; "I dare say your mother will do something for you. Women are the natural source of supplies for the sort of person you seem at the point of becoming." The barrier of paper, covered with print in regular columns, shut one from the other.

Anthony burned under an overwhelming sense of injustice. He decided that he would leave the room, his father, for ever; but, somehow, he re-

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mained motionless in his chair, casting about in his thoughts for words with which to combat the elder's scorn. He thought of Eliza; she smiled at him with appealing loveliness; he felt her letter in his pocket, remembered her boundless generosity. He couldn't leave her! The band in the square below was playing a familiar operatic lament, and the refrain beat on his consciousness in waves of despairing and poignant longing. A sea of misery swept over him in which he struggled like a spent swimmer—Eliza was the far, silver shore toward which he fought. It wasn't fair—a sob almost mastered him—to ask him to go away now, when he had but found the inspiration of her charm.

"It's not Siberia," he heard his father say, "nor a life sentence; if this—this 'girl' is serious, you will be closer working for her in California than idle in Ellerton."

"I don't want to go away from her," he whispered; "the world's such a hell of a big, empty place . . . things happen." He dashed some bright tears from his eyes, gazed through the win-

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dow at the tops of the maple trees—a black tracery of foliage against the lights below.

“Two or three years should set you on your feet, give you an opportunity to return.” Eternity could scarcely have seemed more appalling than the term casually indicated by his father; it was unthinkable! A club member entered, fingering the racked journals on the long table, exchanging trivial comments with the older Ball. It seemed incredible to Anthony, in the face of the cataclysm which threatened him, that the world should continue to revolve callously about such topics. It was an affront to the gravity, the dignity, of his suffering. He swiftly left the room.

XIX

IT was Saturday night; Bay Street was thronged, the stores brilliantly lit. He saw in the distance the red and blue jars of illuminated water that advertised Doctor Allhop's drugstore, and turned abruptly on his heel. In the seclusion of his room he once more read Eliza's letter: it was a superlative document of sweet common sense, the soul of nobility, of wisdom, of tenderness, of divine pity. In its light all other suggestions, considerations, courses, seemed tawdry and ignoble. The boasted wisdom of a world of old men, of material experience, seemed only the mean makeshifts for base and unworthy ends. The ecstasy sweeping from his heart to his brain, the delicious fancies, the rare harmonies, that haunted him, the ineffable perfume of invisible lilacs—these were the true material from which to fashion life, these were the high things, the important. And youth was the time to grasp

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them: a swift premonition seized him of the coldness, the ineptitude, the disease, of old age.

For the first time his realization of death had a definite connection with himself: he was turning out the gas, preparatorily for sleep; and at the instantaneous darkness, he thought, with a gasp of fear, it would be like that. He stood trembling as a full realization of disillusion mastered him, all his hot, swinging blood, the instinctive longing for perpetuation aroused in him by Eliza, in sick revolt. Fearsome images filled his mind . . . the hole in the clay—closed; putrefaction; the linked mass of worms. In feverish haste he lighted the gas; his body was wet with sweat; his heart pounding unsteadily.

The familiar aspect of his room somewhat reassured him; the thought dimmed, slowly conquered by the flooding tide of his living. Then he realized that Eliza too must die, and his terrors vanished before a loving pity for her earthly fragility. Finally, death itself assumed a less threatening guise; peace stole imperceptibly into his heart. A vague belief, new born of his pas-

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sion, that dying was not the end of all, rose within him—there must be a struggle, heights to win, gulfs to cross, a faith to keep. With steady fingers he put out the gas. Eliza was his faith: he fell into a sound slumber.

XX

HE made no comment when, in the morning, his mother made tentative piles of his clothing. He would see Eliza that afternoon, and then announce their decision. His mother attempted to fathom his feeling at the prospect of the journey, the separation from Ellerton; but, the memory of his father's cutting words still rankling in his mind, he evaded her questioning.

"If you are going to be miserable out there," she told him, enveloping him in the affection of her steady grey gaze, "something else might be found. I can always help—"

"You don't understand these things," he interrupted her brusquely, annoyed by his father's prescience. They were sitting in her sewing room, a pile of his socks at her side. She wore her familiar, severe garb, the steel-bowed spectacles directed upon the needle flashing steadily

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in her assured fingers. She was eternally laboring for her children, Anthony realized with a pang of affection. His earliest memories were charged with her unflagging care, the touch of her smooth and tireless hands, the defense of her energetic voice.

He must tell her about his engagement, but not until he had seen Eliza again, when something definite would be agreed upon. It was immensely difficult for him to talk about the subject nearest his heart—words diminished and misrepresented it: he wanted to brood over it, secretly, for days.

XXI

LATER he dressed with scrupulous exactitude, and proceeded directly to Hydrangea House. The afternoon was sultry, the air full of the soothing drone of summer insects; the dust of the road rose in heavy puffs about his feet. He crossed the stream and fields, saturated with sunlight, and came to the pillared portico of his destination.

“Miss Dreen,” Anthony said, stepping forward into the opening door.

“Miss Dreen cannot see you,” the servant returned without hesitation. Anthony drew back, momentarily repelled; but, before he could question this announcement, he heard grinding wheels on the gravel drive. Turning, he saw a motor stop, and Mrs. Dreen descend, followed by a man with a somber, deeply-scored countenance. Anthony moved forward eagerly as she mounted the

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steps. "Mrs. Dreen," he asked; "can you tell me—" She passed with a confused, blank face, without stopping or acknowledging his salutation, and the door closed softly upon her and her companion.

A momentary flame of anger within Anthony quickly sank to cold consternation. Eliza had told her parents, and they had dismissed the idea and him. It was evident they had forbidden her to see him. He walked indecisively down the steps, still carrying his hat, and stopped mechanically on the driveway. He gazed blindly over a brilliant scarlet bed of geraniums, over the extended lawn, the rolling hills of Ellerton. Then his courage returned, stiffened by the obstacles which apparently confronted him: he would show them that he was not lightly dismissed; no power on earth should separate him from Eliza.

The servant had only obeyed Mrs. Dreen's direction; Eliza, he was certain, had no choice in the matter of his reception. Then, unexpectedly, he remembered his father's words, the latter's

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contemptuous reference to all appeals to women. He must go to Mr. Dreen, and straightforwardly state his position, tell him . . . *what?* Why, that he, Anthony Ball, loved Eliza, desired her, had come to take her away . . . *where?* In all the world he had no place prepared for her. He drove his hand into his pocket, and discovered a quarter of a dollar and some odd pennies—all that he possessed. Suddenly he laughed, a short, sorry merriment that stopped in a dry gasp. He turned and ran, stumbling over the grass, through the hot dust, toward Ellerton. Two years, he thought, California; California and two years.

XXII

A NTHONY sat late into the night composing an explanatory and farewell letter to Eliza:

"Your family would laugh at me," he wrote; "I couldn't show them a dollar. And although my father has done a great deal for me he wouldn't do this. I couldn't expect him to. Mother might help, she is like you, but I could not very well live between two women, could I? The only hope is California for a couple of years. You know how much I want to stay with you, how hard this is to write, when our engagement, everything, is so new and wonderful. But it would only be harder later. If I had seen you this afternoon I would never have left you. I am going to-morrow night. This will come to you in the morning, and I will be home if you send me a message. I would like to see you again

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before I go away in order to come back to you for ever. I would like to hear you say again that you love me. Sometimes I think it never really happened. If I don't see you again before I leave, remember I shall never change, I shall love you always, and not forget the least thing you said. I wish now I had studied so that I could write better. Remember that I belong to you, when you want me I will come to you if it's around the world; I would come to you if I were dead I think. Good-bye, dear, dear Eliza, until to-morrow anyhow, and that's a long while to be without seeing you or hearing your voice."

At the announcement of his agreement to go West, the attitude of his father had modified greatly; his hand continually sought Anthony's shoulder; he consulted gravely, as it were with an equal, in regard to trains, precautions, new climates. His mother busied herself over his clothes, her rare speech brusque and hurried. To Anthony she seemed suddenly old, grey; her hands trembled, and necessary stitches were uneven.

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He was aware that the mail for Hydrangea House was collected before noon, and he sat expectantly in the room overlooking the street. It was dark and cool—there were creamy tea roses in the Canton jar again—while in the street it was hot and bright. A sere engraving of Joseph Bonaparte in regal robes gazed serenely from the wall. The hour for luncheon arrived without any message from Eliza. Throughout the afternoon he dropped his pressing affairs and descended to the street. . . . Nothing.

His heart grew heavy with doubts, with fears—his letter had been intercepted; or, if Eliza had received it, her answer had been diverted. Perhaps she had at last realized that he was unfit for her love. The impulse almost mastered him to go once more to Hydrangea House, but pride prevented; his unhappiness hardened, grew bitter, suspicious. Then he again read her letter, and its patent sincerity swept away all doubt; Eliza was unwavering; if not now, he should find her at the end of two years, unchanged, warm, beautiful.

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He was summoned to dinner, where he found the delicacies he especially liked. The plates were liberally filled, all made a pretense of eating, but, at the end, the food remained hardly touched. The forced conversation fell into sudden disturbing silences. His father sharpened the carving knife twice, which, for shad roe, was scarcely necessary; his mother scolded the servant without cause; even Ellie was affected, and smiled at him with a bright tenderness.

He was to leave Ellerton at midnight to connect with a western express, and it was arranged for him to spend a last hour at the Club with his father. Ellie and the servant stood upon the pavement, his mother was upstairs in the sewing room . . . where he entered softly.

At the Club the billiard room was dark, the tables shrouded, but from a room at the end of the hall came the murmur of the nightly coon-can players. They seated themselves at a table, and his father ordered beer and cigars. It was the first time that he had acknowledged Anthony's

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possession of the discretion of maturity, and Anthony raised the stein to his lips with the feeling that it was a sacrament of his manhood, an earnest and pledge of his success.

The midnight train emerged from the gloom of the station, passed through the outskirts of Ellerton, detached rows of dark dwellings, by the grounds of the Baseball Association, its fence still plastered with the gaudy circus posters, into the dim fields and shining streams. Anthony stood on the last swinging platform, gazing back at the gloom that enveloped Ellerton, at the place where Hydrangea House was hidden by the hills. An acute misery possessed him—the unsettled manner of his departure from Eliza, her silence, struggled in his thoughts with the attempt to realize the necessity of the course he had adopted to bring about a final and lasting joy. He wondered if Eliza would understand the need for his going; but, assured of her wise sympathy, he felt that she would; and a measure of content settled upon him. The engine swung about a curve, disappearing into the obscurity of a wood. “Eliza,”

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he cried aloud, "Eliza, be here when I come back to you!"

He sat for the greater part of an hour on the deserted platform of the junction, where signal lamps glistened on the steel rails that vanished into the night, into the West, the inscrutable future. The headlight of the massive locomotive flared unexpectedly, whitely upon him; the engine, with a brief glimpse of a sanguinary heart of fire illuminating a sooty human countenance, gleaming liquid eyeballs, passed and stopped; and Anthony hastily mounted the train. He made his way through the narrow passage of buttoned red curtains and found his place, where he sank into a weary, dreamless sleep.

XXIII

IN the morning his was the last berth made up for the day; the car, shaded against the sun, was rolling slightly, and he braced himself as he made his way toward breakfast. The tables were all occupied; but, at a carelessly hospitable nod, he found a place with two men. They were, he immediately saw, Jews. One was robustly middle-aged, with a pinkly smooth countenance, a slightly flattened nose, and eyes as colorless as clear water in a goblet. He was carefully dressed in shepherd's plaid, with a grey tie that held a noticeably fine pearl. His companion was thin and dark, with a heavy nose irritated to rawness by the constant application of a blue silk handkerchief. The latter, Anthony discovered in the course of the commonplaces which followed, was sycophant and henchman of the first—a never failing source of applause for the former's witticisms.

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"How far out are you bound?" queried the owner of the pearl. Then, when Anthony had told him his destination, "No business opportunities in California for a young man without capital behind him; only hard work and a day laborer's wages. Nothing West but fruit, land, and politics on a large scale. My chauffeur at a hundred a month does better than eighty per cent. of the young ones in the West."

This information fell like a dark cloud over Anthony's sanguine hopes for a speedy and opulent return. A sense of imminent misfortune pressed upon him, a sudden unreasoning dread of what might be in store for Eliza and himself, of the countless perils of a protracted delay. At the end of two years he might be no better off than he was at present. His brother-in-law, he knew, would pay him only a nominal amount at first. The two years stretched out interminably in his imagination.

The more prosperous of his companions selected a cigar from a silk case and cut it with a gold penknife; they removed to the smoking car.

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"I drove a car for a while," Anthony informed them later, mingling the acidulous smoke of a Dulcina with the more fragrant clouds of Habana; "it was a Challenger six."

"Hartmann here is a director in the Challenger factory," the sycophant told him. "The factory's in our home city, where we are going. It's a great car." Hartmann examined Anthony with a new and more personal interest. "Did you like it?" he demanded.

"It's all right, for the price," Anthony assured him. "It's the most sporting looking car on the American market."

"That's the thing," the other declared with satisfaction; "big sales and a quick return on investment. A showy car is what the public wants. The engine's unimportant: it's paint that counts."

"Do you have any radiator trouble?" Anthony demanded. The other regarded him shrewdly. "I run a Berliet," he announced. "I was discussing a popular article." He arranged himself more comfortably in his leather chair, and prepared for sleep.

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Anthony returned to his place in the coach, where he brooded dejectedly upon what he had heard about California. He thought of the distance widening at a dizzy rate between Eliza and himself, and was plunged into a vast pit of loneliness. . . . He had made a terrible mistake in leaving her. It seemed to him now that he had deserted her; perhaps she was suffering on account of him—had expected him to free her from an intolerable condition. Again he cursed in his heart the prudent counsel of old men, the cold sapience of the world, that had betrayed him, that had prevailed over his instinct, his longing.

XXIV

AT lunch time he was progressing toward an empty table when Hartmann waved him imperiously to a place at his side. "Have a drink," he advised genially; "this is my affair." Beer followed the initial cocktail, and brandy wound the meal to a comfortable conclusion. A Habana in the smoking car completed Anthony's bodily satisfaction.

"California's no place for a young man without capital," Hartmann reiterated; "you work like a dog for two and a half a day; no future." He paused, allowing this to be digested; then: "I have a little plan to propose. You can take it or not—or perhaps you are not competent. My chauffeur is laid up with a broken wrist, a matter of a month or more; how would you like to run my car until he returns? Then, if you are satisfactory, you can go into the Challenger factory, with something ahead of you, a future. Or you can go on to California . . . say seventy-five

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dollars richer." Anthony shook his head regretfully. "Don't answer now," Hartmann advised; "Spring City is three hours off. Think it over; seventy-five dollars; a chance, if you are handy, in the factory."

Anthony was suddenly obsessed by the thought that, at Spring City, he should be only a day removed from Eliza. He wondered what his father would say to this new possibility? At worst he would only be delayed in his arrival in California, and with seventy-five dollars in consequence. At best—the Challenger factory: he expanded optimistically the opportunities offered by the latter. If he could show his father immediate fruits from a change of plan, the elder, he was certain, would add his approval. In a passing skeptical mood he speculated upon Hartmann's motive in this offer to an entire stranger; but his doubts speedily vanished—any irregularity must be immediately visible.

"You can make a stop-over on your ticket for a couple of days and try it," the other interjected; "it will cost you nothing."

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Only a day removed from Eliza! he would write to his father, his brother-in-law, and explain! he had decided that it would do no harm to try it. "Good!" the Jew exclaimed; "see the conductor about your ticket. If you decide to remain, you can send for your trunk." He offered his cigar case to his companion, but now neglected to include Anthony. Imperceptibly their relations had changed; Hartmann's geniality decreased; his colorless gaze wandered indifferently. Anthony found the conductor and arranged a stop-over at Spring City. He collected his belongings; and, not long after, he stood on a station platform beside his bag, watching with sudden misgivings the rear of the train he had left, disappearing behind a bulk of factories and clustered shanties.

Hartmann handed him a card, with a written direction and address. "The garage," he explained; "have the car ready to-morrow at nine. I'll allow you an expense of five dollars until a definite arrangement."

Anthony quickly found the garage—a struc-

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ture of iron and glass, with a concrete floor where cars were drawn up in glistening rows. A line of chairs fronted upon the pavement, occupied by mechanics in greasy overalls, smarter chauffeurs, and garrulous, nondescript hangers-on. The foreman was within, busy with the compression tanks. He was short in stature, with a pale, concerned countenance. "Fourth on the right from the front," he directed, reading Hartmann's card; "there's a bad shoe on the back. . . . So the old man's ready for another little trip," he commented.

"His chauffeur has a broken wrist," Anthony explained. "He's offered me the job for a month."

"Wrist hell! Hartmann fired him: he knew too much—about sprees with Kuhn. He's a sharp duck; I'll bet he picked you up outside Spring City."

"I met him on the Sunset Limited," Anthony continued; "I understood he was a director in the Challenger Motor-Car Company—"

"He's that, right enough; the rottenest car and

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shop in America; they're so dam' mean they won't provide their men with drinking water; they have to bring labor from the East, scabs and other truck."

The conviction settled heavily upon Anthony that, after all, he made a mistake in listening to Hartmann, in falling in with his suggestion. If there had been another train through Spring City for California that night, he would have taken it. But, as there was not, and he had committed himself for the next twenty-four hours, he made his way to the Berliet car indicated. There he took off his coat and busied himself with replacing the damaged shoe. When that was accomplished the dusk had thickened to evening; the suspended gas globes in the garage had been lighted, and shone like lemon-yellow moons multiplied in the lilac depths of a mirrored twilight.

He saw, across the street, a creamery, and, at a bare table, consumed a quart of milk and a plate of sugared rusk. Then, on a chair in the line before the garage, he sat half intent upon the conversation about him, half considering the

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swift changes that had overtaken him in the past few days. His fingers closed upon Eliza's letter in his pocket; and he gazed at the callous and ribald faces at his side, heard the truculent laughter, with wonderment that they existed in the same world with her delicate beauty. She smiled at him, out of his memory, over a mass of white bloom, and the present seemed like an ugly dream from which he must awake in her presence. Or was the other a dream, a vision of immaterial delight spread before his wondering mind, and this harsh mirth, these mocking faces, Hartmann's smooth lies, the hateful reality?

The night deepened, one by one the chairs before the garage were deserted, the sharp pounding of a hammer on metal sounded from within, the disjointed measures of a sentimental song. A sudden weariness swept over Anthony, a distaste for the task of seeking a room through the strange streets; and, arranging the cushions in Hartmann's car, he slept there until morning. He awoke to the flooding of the concrete floor with a sheet of water flashing in the crisp sun-

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light. It was eight o'clock, and he made a hurried toilet at a convenient faucet, breakfasting at the creamery.

Hartmann appeared shortly after nine: his countenance glowed from a scented massage, his yellow boots shone with restrained splendor, and a sprig of geranium was drawn through an ironed buttonhole. He nodded briefly to Anthony, and narrowly watched the latter maneuver the Berliet from its place in the row on to the street. They sped smoothly across town to what, evidently, was the principal shopping thoroughfare and drew up before a glittering plate glass window that bore the chaste design, "Hartmann & Company." Hartmann prepared to descend.

"I think I'll go on West this afternoon," Anthony informed him.

Annoyance was plainly visible upon the other's countenance "I was just congratulating myself on a find," he declared; "you must at least stay with me until I get some one else." He paused; Anthony made no comment. "Now listen to what I will do," he pronounced finally; "if you

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will stay with me for a month I'll give you a hundred dollars and your expenses—it will be clear money. I . . . I had thought of taking a little trip in the car; I'm feeling the store a little, and I need a discreet man. Think it over—a hundred in your pocket, and you may be able to get off in three weeks." He left hurriedly, without giving Anthony an opportunity for further speech. It was an alluring offer—a hundred dollars secured for the future, for Eliza. He speculated about the prospective trip, Hartmann's wish to find a "discreet" man, the foreman's insinuations. The motive, however, didn't concern him: the wage was his sole consideration, and that, he decided, he could not afford to lose. He whistled to a newsboy and, studying the baseball scores, waited comfortably for his employer.

Later he drove Hartmann, now accompanied by Kuhn, out of town, through a district of suburban villas, smooth white roads and green lawns, into the farmland and pasturage beyond. They finally stopped at an inn of weathered grey stone, set behind a row of ancient elms. A wom-

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an was sitting on the portico, and she rose and came forward sinuously as the men descended from the motor-car. Anthony saw that she had a full, voluptuous figure, lusterless yellow hair, and sleepy eyes. Hartmann patted her upon the shoulder, and the three moved to the portico, where they sat conversing over a table of whiskies and soda. Occasional shrill bursts of laughter, gross terms, reached Anthony. The woman lounged nonchalantly in her chair; she wore a transparent white waist, through which was visible a confused tracery of purple ribband and frank rubicund flesh. When the men rose, Hartmann kissed her. "Thursday," he reminded her; "shortly after three."

"And I'll depend on you," Kuhn added; "a good figger and a loving disposition. We don't want any dead ones on this trip."

"Laura's all right," she assured him. "She's just ready for something of this sort; she goes off about twice a year."

When they had started, Hartmann leaned forward. "Going Thursday . . . that little trip I

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spoke to you about. No talking, understand. Look over the tires, get what you think necessary for five or six hundred miles.” He tended Anthony a crisp currency note. “Here’s the five. Your salary starts to-morrow.”

That night Anthony wrote a letter of explanation to his father, a note to California in reference to his trunk, and a short communication to Eliza. He was not certain that she would receive it. Her parents, he was convinced, were opposed to him—they were ignorant of the singleness, the depth, the determination, of his love.

XXV

IT was nearly four when, on Thursday, Anthony stopped the car before the inn by the elms. The woman with the yellow hair, accompanied by a figure in a shapeless russet silk coat, was waiting for them. The latter carried a small patent leather dressing case, and a large bag reposed on the portico, which Anthony strapped to the luggage rack. Kuhn, animated by a flow of superabundant animal spirits, bantered each member of the party: he gave Anthony a cigar that had been slightly broken, tipped off Hartmann's cap, and, with profound gallantry, assisted the women into the car. Hartmann discussed routes over an unfolded map with Anthony; then, the course laid out, they moved forward.

Their way led over an old postroad, now between walls and trees, dank and grey with age and dust, now rising steadily into a region of

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bluish hills. Scraps of conversation fell upon Anthony's hearing: the woman in the russet coat, he learned, was named Laura Dallam. Kuhn talked incessantly, and, occasionally, she replied to his sallies in a cool, detached voice. She differed in manner from the others; she was a little disdainful, Anthony discovered. Once she said sharply, "Do let me enjoy the country."

They slipped smoothly through the afternoon to the end of day. The sun had vanished beyond the hills when they stopped at an inn on the outskirts of an undiscovered town. It was directly on the road, and, built in a flimsy imitation of an Elizabethan hostelry, had benches at either side of the entrance.

There Anthony sat later, while, from a balcony above him, fell the tones of his employer and his companions. He could hear them clearly, distinguish Hartmann's heavy jocularity, the yellow-haired woman's sirupy voice and Laura Dallam's crisp utterances. Kuhn's labored wit had drooped with the afternoon; an accent of complaint had grown upon him. Occasionally there

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was a thin, clear tinkle of glasses and ice. As the night deepened, the conversation above grew blurred, peals of inconsequential laughter more frequent; a glass fell on the balcony and broke with a small, sudden explosion. Some one—it was the Dallam woman—exclaimed, “Don’t!” She leaned over the railing above Anthony’s head and said despairingly, “I can’t get drunk!” Kuhn pressed to her side, and she moved away impatiently. He became enraged, and they began a low, bitter wrangling. Finally Hartmann insinuated himself between them; the two women disappeared, and Kuhn complained aloud of the manner in which he had been treated.

“She’s all right,” Hartmann assured him; “you went at it too heavy; take your time; she’s not a flapper from the chorus.” They tramped heavily across the balcony, whispering tensely, into the hotel.

The morning following they failed to start until past eleven: Hartmann’s countenance was pasty from the night’s debauch, greenish shadows hung beneath his colorless eyes, his mouth was a

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leaden line; the yellow-haired woman was haggard, she looked older by ten years than on the previous day. Kuhn was savagely, morosely, silent. But Mrs. Dallam was as fresh, as sparkling, as the morning itself. She nodded brightly at Anthony as she took a seat forward, by his side. A heavy veil was draped back from her face, and he saw that it was finely-cut; an intensely black bang fell squarely across her low, white forehead, beneath which eyes of a somber, velvety blue were oddly compelling; and against the blanched oval of her face her mouth was like a print of blood. It was a potent, vaguely disturbing countenance; and, beneath the voluminous silk coat, he saw narrow black slippers with carelessly tied bows that, stinging his imagination, reminded him of wasps.

As he drove the car he was frequently aware of her exotic gaze resting speculatively upon him. On a high, sunny reach of road there was a shrill rush of escaping air, and he found a rear tire flat. Hartmann and his mate explored the road; Kuhn gloomed aloof. Mrs. Dallam seated herself on a bank near by while Anthony replaced the

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inner tube. It was hot, and he removed his coat; soon his shirt was clinging to the rippling young muscles of his vigorous torso. Once, when he straightened up to wipe the perspiration from his brow, Mrs. Dallam caught his glance and held it with a slow smile.

Their progress for the day ended at a small hotel maintained upon the roof of a ridge of hills. As the dusk deepened, the valley beyond swam with warm, scattered lights, while above, in illimitable space, gleamed stars near, only a few millions of miles away, and stars far, millions upon millions of miles distant.

The ground floor of the hotel was divided by a passage: on one side the bar, and on the other a dining and lounging room, lit with kerosene lamps swung below tin reflectors. When Anthony was ready for supper the others had disappeared above. He was served by the proprietor, a short, rotund man with a glistening red face and hands like swollen pincushions. He breathed stertorously amid his exertions, muttering objurgations in connection with the

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name of an absent servitor, hopelessly drunk, Anthony gathered, in the stable.

A bell sounded sharply from above, and he disappeared abruptly, shouting up the stair. Then, shortly after, he reappeared in the dining room with a tray bearing a pitcher of water, glasses, and a bottle labelled with the name of a popular brand of whiskey. "Can you run this up to your folks?" he demanded, in a storm of explosive breaths. "I got enough to stall three men down here." Anthony balanced the tray and moved toward the stair.

He had stopped in the hallway to redispone his burden, when he heard the changing gears of a second automobile without. He moved carefully upward, aware of lowered voices at his back, then the sound of footsteps following him. He turned as he had been directed in the hall above, and knocked upon a closed door. Kuhn's sullen voice bade him come in. He had opened the door, when, almost upsetting the tray, a small group at his back pushed him aside and entered Hartmann's room.

XXVI

THE flaring gas jet within shone on Hartmann, in his shirt sleeves, reclining collarless on a bed, while the yellow-haired woman, in a short, vivid green petticoat, but otherwise normally garbed, sat by him twisting her fingers in his hair. Mrs. Dallam, her waist open at the neck, was cold-creaming her throat, while Kuhn was decorating her bared arms with pats of pink powder from a silver-mounted puff. He turned at the small commotion in the doorway. . . . His jaw dropped, and his glabrous eyes bulged in incredulous dismay. The powder puff fell to the floor; he wet his dry lips with his tongue. “Minna!” he stammered; “Minna!”

The woman in the door had grey hair streaked and soiled with sallow white, and a deeply scored, harsh countenance. Her gnarled hands were tightly clenched, and her tall, spare figure shook

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with suppressed excitement and emotion. At her back were two men, one unobtrusive, remarkable in his lack of salient feature; the other stolidly, heavily Semitic.

Hartmann hastily scrambled into an upright position; the woman at his side gave vent to a startled slight scream, desperately arranging her scant draperies; Mrs. Dallam, with a stony face, continued to rub cold cream into her throat.

“Now, Mrs. Kuhn,” Hartmann stuttered, “everything can be satisfactorily explained.” The woman he addressed paid not the slightest attention to him, but, advancing into the room, gazed with mingled hatred and curiosity at Mrs. Dallam. The two women stood motionless, tense, oblivious of the others in their silent, merciless battle. Mrs. Dallam smiled slightly, with coldly contemptuous lips, at the grotesque figure before her: the ill-fitting dress upon the wasted body, the hat pinned askew on the thin, time-stained hair. And the other, painfully rigid, worn, brittle, gazed with bitter appraisal at the softly-rounded, graceful figure, the mature youth, that mocked her.

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"Minna," Kuhn reiterated, "come outside, won't you? I want to see you outside. Tell her to go out, Abie," he entreated the stolid figure at the door; "it ain't fit for her to be here. I will see you all down-stairs." He laid a shaking hand upon his wife's shoulder. "Come away," he implored.

But still, apparently unconscious of his presence, she gazed at Mrs. Dallam.

"You gutter-piece!" she said finally; "you thief!"

Mrs. Dallam laughed easily. "Steal that!" she exclaimed, indicating Kuhn, "that . . . beetle! If it's any consolation to you—he hasn't put his hand on me. It makes me ill to be near him. I should be grateful if you'd take him home."

"That's so, Mrs. Kuhn," Hartmann interpolated eagerly; "nothing's went on you couldn't witness—nothing."

Tears stole slowly over the inequalities of Mrs. Kuhn's countenance. She trembled so violently that the man called Abie stepped forward and

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supported her. Now Kuhn was weeping copiously. "Oh, Minna!" he cried, "may I go home with you? may I go *now*? These people don't mean anything to me, not like you do. I get crazy at times, and gotta have excitement. I hate it," he declared; "but I can't somehow stand out against it. But you must give me another try. . . . Why, I'd be nothing in the world without you; I'd go down to hell alive without you, Minna."

Mrs. Kuhn became unmanageable; she uttered a series of short, gasping cries and wilted into the arm about her. "Take her out, Abie," Kuhn entreated; "take her out of this."

Anthony, with the tray still balanced in his grasp, stood aside. The man without characteristics was making rapid notes in an unostentatious wallet. Then Mrs. Kuhn, followed by her husband and the third, disappeared into the hall.

"Shut the door," Hartmann commanded sharply; "and give me a drink." Anthony set the tray on a table. "God!" the yellow-haired woman ejaculated, "me too." Mrs. Dallam re-

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turned to the mirror, and surveyed the effects of the cold cream. With an expression of distaste she brushed the marks of the powder from her arm. "The beetle!" she repeated.

"Minna Kuhn won't bring action," Hartmann declared, with growing confidence; "she'll take him back; nothing will come out." The other woman drank deeply; a purplish flush mantled her full countenance. A strand of metallic hair slipped over her eyes. "Let her talk," she asseverated; "we're Bohemians." She clasped Hartmann to her ample bosom.

Mrs. Dallam moved toward the half opened door to the room beyond. "Bring in the pitcher of water, Anthony," she directed. He followed her with the water, and she bolted the door behind them. The door to the hall was closed too. She stopped and smiled at him with narrowed, enigmatic eyes. The subtle force of her being swept tingling over him. She laid her hand, warm, palpitatingly alive, upon his.

"The swine," she said; "how did we get into this, you and I?"

XXVII

THE patent leather dressing case lay open on a bureau, spilling a cascade of ivory toilet implements; a severely plain black dinner gown lay limp, dully shimmering, over the back of a chair; and, on the bed, a soft white heap of undergarments gave out a seductive odor of lavender. "Cigarettes in the leather box," she indicated; "take some outside." A screened door opened upon a boxlike balcony, cut into the angle of the roof; and Anthony, aware of the warm weight of a guiding arm, found himself upon it. He seated himself on the railing and lit a cigarette. He must go in a minute, he thought.

The lights had vanished from the valley; at his back the risen moon dimmed the stars, turned the leaves silver grey. A wan ray fell upon a clump of bushes below—lilacs, but the blooms had wilted, gone. The screen door opened, and Mrs. Dallam was at his side; she sank into a chair,

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the rosy blur of a cigarette in her fingers; she wore a loose wrap of deep green silk, open at her throat upon the white web beneath; in the obscurity her eyes were as black, as lusterless, as ebony, her mouth was a purple stain.

She smoked silently, gazing into the night. He would go now, he decided, and moved from his place on the rail. But with clinging fingers she caught his wrist, reproachfully lifting a velvety gaze. "I will not be left alone," she declared. "I simply must have some one with me . . . you, or I will get despondent. You are—no, I won't say young, that would make you cross; you are like that fabulous fountain the Spaniards hunted in Florida: I want to drink deep, deep."

Anthony's resolution wavered; it was early; it pleased him that so fine a creature should desire his presence; an unhappy note in her voice moved him to pity. She was lonely, and so was he; why should they not support each other? He leaned close to her upon the sloping roof. She talked little; she laughed once, a low, silvery peal whose echo ran up and down his spine.

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They heard a servant closing the shutters, the doors, below them, and the sound linked Anthony to Mrs. Dallam in a feeling of pervading intimacy. She rose and stood pressed against his side, and his heart beat, instantly unsteady. The night grew strangely oppressive, there was a roll of distant, muffled thunder; he turned to her with a commonplace about the heat, when her arms went about his neck, and she kissed him full, slowly, upon the lips. Subconsciously he held her supple body to him. She leaned back against his arms, her eyes shut and lips parted. A terrible and brute tyranny of desire welled up within him, sweeping away every vestige of control, of memory. The sky whirled in his vision, the substantial world vanished in a smother of flaming mists.

Then he released her so suddenly that she fell against the railing, recovering her poise with difficulty. Anthony stumbled back, drawing his hand across his brow. "What . . . what damned perfume's on you?" he demanded in a voice hoarse with apprehension.

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"None at all," she assured him; "I never . . . why, Anthony, are you ill?"

Wave after wave of sweetness enveloped him, choking, nauseating, stinging his eyes, extinguishing the fire within him, turning the lust to ashes. He too supported himself upon the rail, and his gaze fell below, to the bushes. Was it the moonlight, or were they, where they had been bare a few minutes before, now covered with great misty masses of lilacs? The perfume of the flowers came up to him breath on breath: he could see them clearly now. . . . White lilacs!

An overwhelming panic swept over him, a sudden dread of his surroundings, of the silken figure of the woman before him. He must get away. He pushed her roughly aside, swung back the screen door, and clattered through the room and down the stairs. He fumbled for a moment with a bolted door, and then was outside, free. Without hesitancy he fled into the night, the secretive shadows. He ran until he literally fell, with bursting lungs and shaking, powerless knees, upon a bank.

XXVIII

THE hotel was lost; the silence, the peace of nature, unbroken. A drowsy flutter of wings stilled in a hedge. The moon sailed behind a cloud that drooped low upon the earth, and great, slow drops of rain fell to a continuous and far reverberation. They struck coolly upon Anthony's face, pattered among the grass, dropped with minute explosions of dust upon the road. The shower passed, the cloud dissolved, and the crystal flood of light fell once more into the cup of the valley.

It spread like a balm over Anthony: Hartmann, Mrs. Dallam, the weeping face of Mrs. Kuhn, were like painted figures in a distasteful act upon which he had turned his back, from which he had gone forth into the supreme spectacle of the spheres, the presence of Eliza Dreen. Every atom thrilled with the thought of her. "Oh, my very dear," he whispered to the sleeping

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birds, the dead white disk of the moon: "I will come back to you . . . good."

After the rain the night was like a damp, sweet veil upon his face; the few stars above him were blurred as though seen through tears; the horizon burned in a circle of flickering ruddy light. He took up his way once more over the soft folds of the road; now, accustomed to the dark, he could distinguish the smooth pebbles by the way, separate grey blades of grass. He walked buoyantly, tirelessly, weaving on the loom of the dim miles mingled visions of future and past, dominated by the serene presence of Eliza.

He felt in a pocket the wallet containing his ticket to California and the generous sum added by his father. There must be no more delay in arriving at his western destination! His excursion with Hartmann had been a grave error, he saw it clearly now—one of those faults, so fatally easy for him to commit, which, if his life were to spell success, if he were to come finally into his heritage of joy, he must scrupulously avoid. In the future he would drive directly, safely, to-

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ward his goal; he would become part of that orderly pattern of life plotted in streets and staid occupations: at the end of day he would return to his small, carefully-tended garden to weed and water, and sit with Eliza on his portico—a respectable, an authentic member of society. On Sunday morning they would go to the Episcopal Church, they would join the somber, festively garbed procession moving toward the faint thunder of the organ. And at dinner he would carve the roast. Thus, quietly, they would grow old, grey, together. They would have a number of children—all girls, he decided.

Imperceptibly the morning was born about him, faint shadows grew under the hedges, the sweet, querulous note of a robin sounded from the sparkling sod. A wind stirred, as immaculate, as dewly fresh, as though it were the first breath blown upon a new world of virginal and lyric beauty. The molten gold of the sun welled out of the east and spilled over the wooden hills and meadows; the violet mists drawn over the swales and streams dissolved; Anthony met a boy driving cows to pasture.

XXIX

H E rapidly overtook a bent and doggedly tramping figure; no common wanderer, he recognized, as he drew nearer. The other's decent suit was eminently presentable, his felt hat brushed, his shoes comparatively new. He turned upon Anthony a countenance as expressionless, as darkly-stained, as a chipped and rusted effigy of iron; deep lines fell back across the dingy cheeks; his lipless mouth was, apparently, another such line; and his eyes, deeply sunk in the skull, were the eyes of a dead man. Yet they were not blind; they saw.

He halted, and surveyed Anthony with a lowered, searching curiosity, clenching with a strained and surprising force the knob of a black stick. Anthony met his scrutiny with the salutation of youth and the road, but the other made no reply; his countenance was as blank as though no word had been spoken. Then a sudden flicker of hot

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light burned in the dull depths of his gaze, his worn face quivered with a swift malignancy, an energy of suspicion, of hatred, that touched Anthony's heart with a cold finger of fear.

"What's your name?" he demanded, his entire being strained in an agony of attention.

Anthony informed him with scrupulous exactitude.

He seemed, for a moment, to doubt Anthony's identity; then the fire died, his eyes grew blank; his grasp relaxed on the stick, and, bent, dogged, he continued on his way.

The repellent contraction of Anthony's heart expanded in a light and careless curiosity, youthful contempt mingled with the gayety of his morning mood, and he hastened his steps until he had again overtaken his inquisitor.

"That's a good cane you've got," he observed of the stout shaft and rounded head.

Its owner grasped it by the lower end, and swung the head against his hand. "Lead," he pronounced somberly. "It would crumble your skull like an egg."

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Again fear stirred vaguely in Anthony: the entire absence of emotion in the sanguinary, the dull, matter-of-fact voice was inhuman, tainted with madness; the total detachment of those deliberate words had been appalling.

"I thought," he continued, "that you might have been Alfred Lukes, but you're too young." As he pronounced that name his grasp tightened whitely about the lead knob. The conviction seized Anthony that it was fortunate he was not the individual in question.

"You want Alfred?" he asked in an attempted jocularity.

"He murdered my boy," the other answered simply. "Him and another. They asked James into a boat to go fishing. Boys will always go fishing; he was only eleven." He stopped in the middle of the road, and produced a small package folded in oiled silk. It proved to be a derringer, of old-fashioned model, with two short black barrels, one atop the other. "Loaded," he said—"to put against his face." Then he rewrapped the weapon and returned it to its place

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of concealment. "I've been looking for Alfred Lukes for nineteen years," he recommenced his dogged progress, "in trains and saloons and stores. Nineteen years ago James was found in the river." He was silent for a moment; then, "One eye was torn out," he added in his weary voice. He turned his blank and terrible gaze upon Anthony, upon the sparkling morning. The derringer dragged slightly upon his coat; the stick—that stick which could crush a skull like an egg—made its trailing signature in the dust. A mingled loathing and pity took possession of Anthony; he recoiled from the corroding and secret horror of that nineteen-year Odyssey of a torturing and impotent spirit of revenge, from the infinite black tide that had swept over the stooping figure at his side, the pitiless memory that had destroyed its sanity.

"It was on Sunday; James had on his nice blue suit and a new red silk necktie . . . they found it knotted about his throat . . . as tight as a big man could make it."

A sudden impulse overcame Anthony to run,

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to leave far behind him this sinister, animated speck on the sunny road, under the dusty branches burdened with ripening fruit, thrilling with the bubbling notes of birds. But, as his gaze fell again upon his companion, he saw only an old man, gaunt with suffering, hurrying toward the noon. A deep, cleansing compassion vanquished the dread, and, spontaneously, he spoke of his own lighter affairs, of California, his destination.

"I have never been west of Chicago," the other interposed. "I hadn't the money; the walking is dreadfully hard; the sun on those plains hurt my head. Do you suppose James Lukes is in California?" he asked, pausing momentarily in his rapid shamble.

In his careless, youthful egotism, Anthony ignored the query. He wondered aloud where he could board a through train to the West.

"Have you got your ticket?"

Anthony tapped complacently upon the pocket that held the wallet. They were walking now through a wood that flowed to the rim of the

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road, and a turn hid either vista. A stream ran through the rank greenery of the bottom, crossed by a bridge of loosely bolted planks. Anthony paused, intent upon the brown, sliding water beneath him, the minute minnows balancing against the stream. In that closed place of broken light the cool stillness was profound. The stream fled past its weeds without a gurgle; the leaves hung motionless, as though they had been stamped from metal . . . he might have been, with his companion, within a charmed circle of everlasting tranquillity. Then:

“I wonder if Alfred Lukes is in California?” the latter resumed. “I’ve never got there: the fare . . . too expensive, the sun hurt my head.” Anthony lit a Dulcina, and expelled a cloud of blue smoke that rose compactly in the motionless air. “California,” the other repeated, sunk in thought; “I wonder—”

“California’s a big place,” Anthony hazarded.

“If he was there I’d find him.” Then, in his mechanical and dispassionate voice, he cursed Alfred Lukes with the utmost foulness. One

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heated word, the slightest elevation of his even tones, would have made the performance human, intelligent; but the deadly monotony, the impersonal accents, were as harrowing as though a mummy had ground out of its shrunken and embalmed interior a recital of prehistoric hatred and wrong; it resembled a phonograph record of incalculable depravity. He stood beyond the bridge, resting upon his stick, with his unmoved face turned toward Anthony. His hat cast a deep shade over his eyes; but, below, in a wanton patch of sunlight, his lipless mouth trembled greyly.

“California,” he repeated still again; then, “I must get there.” He shifted his hand lower upon the stick, and moved nearer to Anthony by a step; the patch of sunlight shifted up to his hat and fled.

“You could try the freight cars,” Anthony suggested. The stooping, neatly-brushed figure, the stony countenance, had become, in an intangible manner, menacing, obscurely dangerous. The fingers were drawn like a claw about the club. Then the arm relaxed; he seemed to shrink into

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hopeless resignation. Beyond the leafy arcade Anthony could now see the countryside spread out in sunny fields, fleecy white clouds shifting in the sea of blue. . . . Suddenly a great flame shot up before his eyes, a stunning shock fell upon his head, and the flame went out in a whirling darkness that swept like a black sea over a continent of intolerable pain. He heard, as if from an immense distance, a thin voice pronounce the single word, "California."

XXX

A GRIPPING wave of nausea recalled Anthony to consciousness; a deathly sickness spreading from the pit of his stomach through his entire being. His prostrate head, seeming stripped of its skull, was tortured by the dragging fronds of the ferns among which he lay. He sat up dizzily. Through the leafy opening the fleeting forms of the clouds shifted over the sunny hills. The stream slipped silently through the grass. He staggered down the slight incline and, falling forward upon the ground, let the water flow over his throbbing head. The cool shock revived him, and he washed away a dark, clotted film from his forehead and cheek.

His wallet, with his ticket to California and store of money, was gone. He started in instant, unsteady pursuit of the man who had struck him down and robbed him. But at the edge of the

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wood he paused. How long had he lain among the ferns? the sun was now high over his head, the morning lapsed; the other might have had three, four hours' start. He might now be entrained, bound for California, searching for Alfred Lukes. A sudden weakness forced him to sit at the roadside; he lost consciousness again for a moment. Then, summoning his youth, his vitality, he rose, and walked unsteadily in search of assistance.

He had proceeded an intolerable mile, wiping away a thin trickle of blood that persisted in crawling into his eye, when he saw a low roof amid a tangle of greenery. He stopped with a sobbing breath of relief. He was delirious, he thought, for peering at him through the leaves he saw the countenance and beautiful, bare body of a child, as dark and tense as bronze. A cloud of black hair overhung a face as vivid as a flower; her crimson lips trembled; then, with a startled cry, the figure vanished.

He made his way with difficulty over a short path, overgrown with vines and twisted branches,

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and came abruptly upon a low white house and wide, opened door. An aged and shapeless woman sat on a chair without a back, cutting green beans into a bright tin basin. When she saw him she dropped the pan with a clatter and an unfamiliar exclamation of surprise.

"I've been hurt," Anthony explained; "knocked silly and robbed."

"Gina!" she called excitedly; "Dio mio! Gina!" A young woman, large and loosely molded, with a lusty baby clasped to her bared breast, appeared in the doorway. When she saw Anthony she dropped the baby into the elder's arms. "Poverino!" she cried; "come in the house, little mister." She caught him by the arm, almost lifting him over the doorstep into a cool, dark interior. He had a brief glimpse of drying vegetables strung from the ceiling, of a waxen image of the virgin in faded pink silk finery against the wall; then, with closed eyes, he relaxed into the charge of soothing and skilled fingers. His head rested on a maternal arm while a soft bandage was fixed about his forehead. .

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“Ecco!” she ejaculated, her ministration successful. She led him to a rude couch upon the floor, and gently insisted upon his lying down. He attempted to thank her, but she laid her large, capable hand over his mouth, and he sank into an exhausted, semi-conscious rest. Once she bent over him, dampening the bandage; once he saw, against the light of the door, the shape, slim and beautiful as an angel, of the child. Outside, a low, liquid murmur of voices continued without a break, strange and quieting.

He slept, and woke up refreshed, strengthened. The dusk had thickened in the room, the strings of vegetables were lost in the shadows, a dim oil lamp cast a feeble glow on rude walls. He lay motionless for a few delightful seconds, folded in absolute peace, beneficent quietude. The amazing idea struck him that, perhaps, he had died, and that this was the eternal tranquillity of the hymn books; and he started vigorously to his feet in an absurd panic. The homely figure of a man entering dispelled the illusion—he was a commonplace Italian, one of the multitude who labored in

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the ditches of the country, stood aside in droves from the tracks as trains whirled past.

"What hit your head?" he asked, his mobile face displaying sympathetic interest, concern.

"A leaded stick," Anthony explained. "I was knocked out, robbed."

"Birbanti!" He laid a heavy hand upon Anthony's shoulder. "You feel better now, già?" The latter, confused by such open attention, shook the hand from its friendly grip. "He was crazy," he awkwardly explained, "and looking for a man who had killed his son; he wanted to get to California, and I told him I had a ticket west."

The laborer led Anthony to a room where a rude table was spread with homely fare—a great, rough loaf of bread, a deep bowl of steaming green soup, flaky white cheese, and a bottle of purple wine. An open door faced the western sky, and the room was filled with the warm afterglow; it hung like a shining veil over the man, the still, maternal countenance of the woman, like an aureole about the baby now sleeping against her breast, and graced the russet countenance of

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an aged peasant. The child that Anthony had seen first, now in a scant white slip, seemed dipped in the gold of dreams.

As he consumed the savory soup, the creamy cheese and wine, the scene impressed him as strangely significant, familiar. He dismissed an idle effort of memory in order to consider the unfortunate aspect assumed by his immediate affairs. Concerning one thing he was determined —he would ask his father to assist him no further toward his western destination. He must himself pay for the initial error, together with all its consequences, of having followed Hartmann. California was his object; he would not write to Ellerton until his westward progress was once more assured.

Two courses were open to him—he could “beat” his way, getting meals when and how he was able, riding, when possible, on freight cars, doing casual jobs on the way. That he dismissed in favor of a second, which in the end, he judged, would prove more speedy. He would make his way to the nearest city, find employment in a

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public or private garage as chauffeur or mechanic, and, in a month at most, have the money necessary for the continuation of his journey.

The household conversed vigorously in their native idiom, giving his thoughts full freedom. The glow in the west faded, sank from the room, but, suddenly, he recognized the familiar quality of his surroundings. It resembled a picture of the Holy Family on the wall of his mother's room; the bare interior was the same, the rugged features of Joseph the carpenter, the brooding beauty of Mary. He almost laughed aloud at the absurd comparison of the exalted scene of Christ's infancy with this commonplace but kindly group, the laborer with soiled and callous hands and wine-stained mouth, the material young woman with the string of cheap blue beads.

The meal at an end, the chairs were pushed back, and the old woman noisily assembled the dishes. Anthony's head throbbed and burned. In passing, the mother's fingers rested upon his brow. "Not too hot," she nodded contentedly.

A consultation followed. Anthony might re-

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main there for the night; or, if he insisted, he might drive into the city with "Nono," who started in a few hours with a wagonload of greens for the morning market. With a clumsy expression of gratitude, he chose the latter, impatient to resume active efforts in his rehabilitation in his own mind.

"Niente!" they disclaimed in chorus.

XXXI

HE fell into an instant slumber on the hospitable heap in the corner, and was awakened while it was still dark. In the flicker of the oil lamp the old man's face swam vaguely against the night. Without, the wagon was loaded, a drooping horse insecurely harnessed into patched shafts. The world was a still space of blue gloom, of indefinite forms suspended in the hush of color, sound; it seemed to be spun out of shadows like cobwebs, out of vapors, scents. A pale, hectic glow on the horizon marked the city. They ambled noiselessly, slowly, forward, under the vague foliage of trees. There was a glint of light in a passing window, the clatter of milk pails; a rooster crowed, thin and clear and triumphant; on a grassy slope by the road they saw a smoldering fire, recumbent forms.

They entered the soiled and ragged outskirts of the city—isolated ranks of hideous boxlike

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dwellings amid raw stretches of clay, rank undergrowth. The horse's hoofs rang on a bricked pave, and the city surged about them. Overhead the elevated tracks made a confused black tracing, rippling with the red and white and green fire of signals. A gigantic truck, drawn by plunging horses whose armored hoofs were ringed in pale flame, passed with a shattering uproar of its metallic load. A train thundered above with a dolorous wail, showering a lurid trail of sparks into the sky, out of which a thick soot sifted down upon the streets. On either hand the blank walls of warehouses shut in the pavements, deserted save for a woman's occasional chalky countenance in the frosty area of the arc lights, or a drunkard lurching laboriously over the gutters. The feverish alarm of firebells sounded from a distant quarter. A heavy odor of stagnant oil, the fetid smoke of flaring chimneys, settled over Anthony, and gratefully he recalled the pastoral peace of the house he had left—the house hidden in its tangled verdure amid the scented space of the countryside.

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They stopped finally before a shed open upon the street, where bluish-orange flames, magnified by tin reflectors, illuminated busy groups. Silvery fish with exposed carmine entrails were ranged in rows; the crisp green spoil of the countryside was spread in the stalls—the silken stalks of early onions, the creamy pink of carrots, wine-red beets; rosy potatoes were heaped by cool, crusty cantaloupe, the vert pods of peas, silvery spinach, and waxy, purple eggplant. Over all hung the delicate aroma of crushed mint, the faint, sweet tang of scarlet strawberries, the spicy fragrance of simple flowers—of cinnamon pinks and heliotrope and clover.

Anthony assisted the other to transfer his load to part of a stall presided over by a woman with bare, powerful elbows, shouting in a boisterous voice in perfect equality with her masculine neighbors.

High above, the dawn flushed the sky; the flares dimmed from a source of light to mere colored fans, and were extinguished. Early buyers arrived at the market with baskets and

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pushcarts. Anthony remained at the old man's side; it was too early to start in search of work; and, at his companion's invitation, he shared the latter's breakfast of cheese and bread, with a stoup of the bitter wine. As the market became crowded, the vendor, in the stress of competition, bargaining, forgot Anthony's presence, and with a deep breath of determination he started in search of employment; he again faced the West.

He had no difficulty in discovering the section of the city given over to the automobile industry —a broad asphalt way with glittering show windows, serried ranks of cars, by either curb. There was, however, no work to be obtained here; a single offer would scarcely pay for his maintenance; in its potentialities California was the merest blur upon the future. Then, for a second and more lucrative position he lacked the necessary papers. Midday found him without a prospect of employment. He had almost two dollars in change that had remained intact; and, lunching sparingly, he continued his inquiries.

It was late when he found himself before a sign

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that proclaimed the ability within to secure positions for competent chauffeurs. And, influenced largely by the chairs which he saw ranged against the wall, he entered and registered. The fee for registration was a dollar, and that left him with scant supplies as he took a place between three other men awaiting skeptically the positions which they had been assured they might confidently expect. With a casual nod to Anthony, a small man with watery blue eyes, clad in a worn and greasy livery, continued a dissertation on methods of making money additional to that of mere salary; on agreements with tiremen, repairs necessary and other, the proper manner in which to bring a car's life quickly and gracefully to a close, in order, he added slyly to the indifferent clerk, to encourage the trade.

The afternoon wasted slowly to a close; no one entered, and the three rose with weary oaths and went in search of a convenient saloon. They waved to Anthony to follow them, but he silently declined.

A profound depression settled over him, a sense

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of impotence, of failure. His wounded head fretted him with frequent hot pains. He was enveloped by a sense of desolating loneliness, which he endeavored to dispel with the thought of Eliza; but she remained as far, as faintly sweet, as the moon of a spring night. It seemed incredible that she had once been in his arms; surely he had dreamed her voice—such voices couldn't exist in reality—telling him that she loved him. Her letter had gone with his wallet, his ticket to California. He had not written her . . . she would be unable to penetrate the reason for his silence, his shame for blundering into such a blind way, his lack of anything reassuring to tell her. He could not write until his feet were once more firmly planted upon the only path that led to success, to happiness, to her.

XXXII

THE clock on the wall above the clerk's head indicated half past five, and Anthony, relinquishing hope for the day, rose. Now he regretted the apparently fruitless expenditure of a dollar. "Leave an address?" the clerk inquired mechanically. "Office open at nine."

"I'll be back," Anthony told him. He turned, and collided with a man entering suddenly from the street. The man was past middle age, with a long, pallid countenance, drooping snuff-colored mustache, a preoccupied gaze behind bluish glasses, and was clad in correct brown linen, but he had an incongruously battered and worn soft hat.

"I want a man to drive my car," he announced abruptly. "I don't particularly care for a highly expert individual, but his habits—" He broke off and muttered, "Superficial adjustment to environment—popular conception of acquired character-

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istics." Then, "must be moderate," he ended unexpectedly.

Anthony lingered, while the clerk assured the other that several highly desirable individuals were available. "In fact," he told him, "one left the office only a few minutes ago; I will have him call upon you in the morning."

"What's this?" he replied, indicating Anthony; "is he a chauffeur?" The clerk nodded. "But," he added, "the man I refer to is older, more experienced . . . sure to satisfy you."

"What references have you?" the prospective employer demanded.

"None," Anthony answered directly. The clerk dismissed his chances with a gesture.

"What experience?" the other persisted.

"Driving on and off for four or five years, and I am a fair mechanic."

"Fair only?"

"That's all, sir."

The older man drew nearer to Anthony, scrutinizing him with a kindly severity. "What's the matter with your head?" he demanded.

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"I was knocked down and robbed on a country road."

"Lose much?"

"Everything."

"Drinking?"

"No, sir."

"Familiar with prehistoric geological strata?"

Anthony admitted that he was not.

"I had hoped," the other murmured, "to get a driver who could assist me with my indices." He renewed his close inspection; then, "Elemental," he pronounced suddenly; "I'll take you."

"Five dollars, please," interpolated the clerk.

Outside, his new employer took Anthony by the shoulder, glancing over his suit. "You can get your things, and then go out to my house."

"I can go sooner than that," Anthony corrected him. "I have no things."

"Nothing but those clothes! Why . . . they will hardly do, will they? You must get something; take it out of your salary. But, hang it, a man must have a change of clothes! You must allow me—you are only a boy. I'll come along;

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no—impossible.” He took a long wallet from his pocket and placed it in Anthony’s hands. “I don’t know what such things cost,” he said. “I think there’s enough; get what you need. I must be off . . . Mousterian deposits. Customs House.” Before Anthony could reply he had started away in a long, quick stride, but he stopped short. “My address!” he cried; “clean forgot.” He gave Anthony a street and number.

“Rufus Hardinge,” he called, hurrying away.

Anthony stood gazing in incredulous surprise at the polished brown wallet in his hand. He turned to hurry after the other, to protest, but already he was out of sight. Anthony slipped the wallet into his pocket, and, his head in a whirl, walked slowly over the street until he found himself opposite a large retail clothing establishment. After a brief hesitation he entered, pausing to glance hastily at his resources. In the leather pocket which contained the paper money he saw a comfortable number of crisp yellow bills; the rest of the space was taken up by bulky and wholly unintelligible notes.

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He purchased a serviceable suit, stout shoes, a cap, and, after a short consideration, two flannel shirts. If this were not satisfactory, he concluded, he could pay with a portion of his salary. The slip of the total amount, which he carefully folded, registered thirty-one dollars and seventy cents.

At a small tobacco shop, where he drew upon his own rapidly diminishing capital, he discovered from the proprietor that it would be necessary to take a suburban car to the address furnished him. He rolled rapidly between rows of small, identical, orderly brick dwellings; on each shallow portico a door exhibited an obviously meretricious graining; dingy or garish curtains draped the single lower windows; the tin eaves were continuous, unvaried, monotonous. Occasionally a greengrocer's display broke the monotony of the vitreous way, a rare saloon or drug-store held the corners. Farther on, the street suffered a decline; the line of dwellings was broken by patches of bedraggled gardens, set with the broken fragments of stone ornaments;

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small frame structures, streaked by the weather and blistered remnants of paint, alternated with stables, stores heaped with the sorry miscellanies of meager, disrupted households. Imperceptibly green spaces opened, foliage fluttered in the orange light of the declining sun; through an opening in the habited wall he caught sight of a glimmering stream, cows wandering against a hill.

He left the car finally at a lane where the houses, set back solidly in smooth, opulent lawns, were somberly comfortable, reserved. The place he sought, a four-square ugly dwelling faced with a tower, the woodwork painted mustard yellow, was surrounded by gigantic tulip poplars. At the front a cement basin caught the spray from a cornucopia held aloft by sportive cherubs balanced precariously on the tails of reversed dolphins, circled by a tan-bark path to the entrance and a broad side porch. He was about to ring the bell when a high young voice summoned him to this porch. There he discovered a girl with a mass of coppery hair, loosely tied and streaming over her shoulder, in a coffee-colored wicker

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chair. She was dressed in white, without ornaments, and wore pale yellow silk stockings. A yellow paper book, with a title in French, was spread upon her lap; and gravely sitting at her side was a large terrier with a shaggy yellow coat.

"I suppose," she said without preliminary, "that you are the person who took father's money. It was really unexpected of you to appear with *any* of it. Give me the wallet," she demanded, without allowing him opportunity for a reply.

He gave it to her without comment, a humorous light rising in his clear gaze. "I warn you," she continued, "I know every penny that was in it. I always give him a fixed amount when he goes out." She emptied the money into her lap, and counted it industriously: at the end she wrinkled her brow.

"Here is a note of what I spent," he informed her, tendering her the slip from the store. She scanned it closely. "That's not unreasonable," she admitted finally, palpably disappointed that no villainous discrepancy had been revealed;

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“and it adds up all right.” Then, with an assumption of business despatch, “It must come out of your salary, of course; father is frightfully impractical.”

“Of course,” he assented solemnly.

“Your references—”

“I haven’t any.”

She made an impatient gesture of dismay; the terrier rose and surveyed him with a low growl. “He promised me that he would do the thing properly, that I positively need not go. What experience have you had?”

He told her briefly.

“Dreadfully unsatisfactory,” she commented, “and you are oceans too young. But . . . we will try you for one week; I can’t promise any more. Would you be willing to help a little in the house—opening boxes, unwrapping bones—?”

“Certainly,” he assured her cheerfully, “any little thing I can do. . . .”

“The car’s at the bottom of the garden; it has to be brought around by the side street. There’s a room overhead, and a bell from the house. You

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must come up very quickly if, in the night, it rings three times, for that," she informed him, "will mean burglars. My father and I are quite alone here with two women. I can't think of anything else now." The terrier moved closer to Anthony, sniffing at his shoes, then raised his golden eyes and subjected him to a lengthy, thoughtful scrutiny. "That is Thomas Huxley," she informed him; "he is a perfectly wonderful investigator, and detests all sentimentality. You will come up to the kitchen for meals," she called, as Anthony turned to descend the lawn; "the bell will ring for your dinner."

XXXIII

H E found the automobile in the semi-gloom of a closed carriage house. On the right, separated by a partition, were three loose stalls, apparently long unoccupied; their ornamental fringe of straw had moldered, and dank grey heaps of feed lay in the troughs. A ladder fixed vertically against a wall disappeared into cobwebby shadows above; and, mounting, Anthony found the room to which he had been directed. It, too, was partitioned from the great bare space of the hay-loft; the musty smell of old hay and heated wood hung dusty, heavy, about the corners, where sounded the faint squeaks of scattering mice. The space which he was to occupy had been rigorously swept and aired; print curtains hung at the small dormer window that overlooked the lawn. Above the washstand was the bell which, he had been warned, would apprise him of the possible presence of burglars above. A

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bright metal clock ticked noisily on a deal bureau, and, on a table beside a pitcher and a glass, two books had been arranged with precise disarray; they proved, upon investigation, to be a volume of the Edib. Rev. LXIX, and a bound collection of the proceedings of the Linnean Society.

He saw by the noisy clock that it was nearly seven, and, hastily washing, responded immediately to the summons of the bell. A small covered porch framed the kitchen door, where he entered to find a long room dimly lit and a dinner set at the end of a table. A bulky woman with a flushed countenance and massive ankles in white cotton stockings set before him half a broiled chicken, an artichoke with a bowl of yellow sauce, and a silver jug of milk.

“God knows it’s a queer meal to put to a hearty young lad,” she observed; “but it’s all was ordered. There’s not a pitata in the house,” she added in palpable disgust. A younger woman in a frilled apron appeared from within, carrying a tray of used dishes. She had a trim figure and

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a broad face glowing with rude vitality, which, with an assumption of disdain, she turned upon Anthony. "I'd never trust myself with him in the machine," she observed to the older woman, "and him not more than a child."

"Be holding your impudent clatter," the other commanded; "you're not required to go out with him at all."

"Mr. Hardinge says, will you see him in the library when you have done," the former shot at Anthony over a shapely shoulder. "You can walk through the dining room to where he is beyond."

The library was a somber chamber: its long windows were draped with stiff folds of green velvet, its walls occupied by high bookcases with leaded glass doors and ornamental Gothic points under the ceiling. A massive desk was piled with papers, pamphlets, printed reports, comparative tables of figures, an hundred and one huddled details; the table beneath a glittering crystal chandelier was hardly better; even the floor was stacked with books about the chair where Anthony,

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found his employer. The latter looked up absently from a printed sheet as Anthony entered.

"Positively," he pronounced, "there are not enough dominants to secure Mendel's position." His expression was profoundly disturbed.

"Yes, sir," Anthony replied non-committally.

"The consequences of that," the other continued, "are beyond prediction." Silence descended upon him; his fixed gaze seemed to be contemplating some unexpected catastrophe, some grave peril, opened before him in the still chamber. "I am at a temporary loss!" he ejaculated suddenly; "we are all at a loss . . . unless my experiments in pure descent warrant—" Suddenly he became aware of Anthony's presence. "Oh!" he said pleasantly; "glad you got fixed up. Say nothing more to Annot—it's all nonsense, taking it out of your salary. That's what I wanted to see you for," he added; "what salary do you require? what did you get at your last place?"

Anthony made a swift calculation of the distance to California, the probable cost of carriage. "I should like seventy-five," he pronounced

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finally. His conscience suddenly and uncomfortably awoke in the presence of the other's unquestioning generosity. "Perhaps I'd better tell you that I don't intend to stay here long. . . . I am anxious to get to California."

But Rufus Hardinge had already forgotten him. "Seventy-five," he had murmured, with a satisfied nod, and once more concentrated his attention upon the sheet in his hand. As Anthony returned through the dining room he found Annot Hardinge arranging a spray of scarlet verbena in a glass vase.

"Has father spoken to you about the salary you are to get?" she asked. He paused, cap in hand. "I told him that you were positively not to get above eighty."

"I told him seventy-five. He seemed contented."

"He would have been contented if you had said seven hundred and fifty." Then, to discountenance any criticism of her father's intelligence, she added: "He is a very famous biologist, you know. The people about here don't understand

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those things, but in London, in Paris, in Berlin, he is easily one of the greatest men alive. He is carrying the Mendelian theory to its absolute, logical conclusion."

"He said something about that to me," Anthony commented; "it seemed to upset him."

A cloud appeared upon her countenance; then, coldly, "That will do," she told him.

Once more in the informal garage, he lit the gas jet on either wall, and in the bubbling, watery light, found the automobile caked with mud and grease, the tires flat, the wires charred, and the cylinders coated with carbon. A pair of old canvas trousers was hanging from a nail, and, donning them and connecting a length of hose to a convenient faucet, he began the task of putting the machine in order. It was past eleven when he finished for the night; and, mounting with cramped and stiffened muscles to his room, he fell into immediate slumber.

XXXIV

ON the following morning he wrote a brief, reassuring note to his father; then, over another page, hesitated with poised pen. "Dear Eliza," he finally began, then once more fell into indecision. "I wish I were back on the Wingo-hocking with you," he embarked. "That was splendid, having you in the canoe, with no one else; the whole world seemed empty except for you and me. It's no joke of an emptiness without you. I have been delayed in reaching California, but I'll soon be out there now, working like thunder for our wedding.

"Mostly I can't realize it, it's too good to be true—you seem like a thing I dreamed about, in a dream all full of moonlight and white flowers. It's funny but I smell lilacs, you know like you picked, everywhere. Last night, cleaning a car just soaked in dirt and greasy smells, that per-

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fume came out of nothing, and hung about so real that it hurt me. And all the time I kept thinking that you were standing beside me and smiling. I knew better, but I had to look more than once.

“Love’s different from what I thought it would be; I thought it would be all happy, but it’s not that, it’s blamed serious. I am always flinching from blows that might fall on you, do you see? Before I went away I saw a man kiss a woman, and they both seemed scared; I understand that now—they loved each other.”

He broke off and gazed out the narrow window over the feathery tops of maples, the symmetrical bronze tops of a clump of pines. The odor of lilacs came to him illusively; he was certain that Eliza was standing at his shoulder; he could hear a silken whisper, feel an intangible thrill of warmth. He turned sharply and faced the empty room, the bright, stentorous clock, the table with the pitcher and glass and serious volumes. “Hell!” he exclaimed in angry remonstrance at his credulity. Still shaken by the

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reality of the impression, he wondered if he were growing crazy. The bell above the washstand rang sharply, and, putting the incomplete letter in a drawer, he proceeded over the tan-bark path that led to the house.

Annot Hardinge beckoned to him from the porch, and, turning, he passed a conservatory built against the side of the dwelling, where he saw small identical plants ranged in mathematical rows.

"What is your name?" she demanded abruptly, as he stopped before her.

"Anthony," he told her.

She was dressed in apricot muslin, with a long necklace of alternate carved gold and amber beads, dependent amber earrings, and a flapping white hat with broad yellow ribbands that streamed downward with her hair. In one hand she held a pair of crumpled white gloves and a soft gold mesh bag.

"You may bring around the car . . . Anthony," she directed. "I want to go into town."

In the heart of the shopping district they

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moved slowly in an unbroken procession of motor landaulets, open cars, and private hansoms, a glittering, colorful procession winding through the glittering, colorful cavern of the shop windows. The sidewalks were thronged with women, brilliant in lace and dyed feathers and jewels, the thin, sustained babble of trivial voices mingled with the heavy, coiling odors of costly perfumes.

When a small heap of bundles had been accumulated a rebellious expression clouded Annot Hardinge's countenance. "Stop at that confectioner's," she directed, indicating a window filled with candies scattered in a creamy tide, bister, pale mauve, and citrine, over fluted, delicately green satin, against a golden mass of molasses bars. She soon emerged with a package tied in silver cord, and paused upon the curb. "I want to go out . . . out, into the heart of the country," she proclaimed; "this crowd, these tinsel women, make me ill. Drive until I tell you to stop . . . away from everything."

When they had left the tangle of paved streets,

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the innumerable stone façades, she directed their course into a ravine of steep sides covered with pines, at the bottom of which a stream foamed whitely over rocky ledges. Beyond, they rose to an upland, where open, undulating hills burned in the blue flame of noon; at their back a trail of dust resettled upon the road, before them a glistening flock of peafowl scattered with harsh, threatening cries. By a gnarled apple tree, whose ripening June apples overhung the road, she called, "Stop!"

The motor halted in the spicy dappled shadow of the tree; at one side a cornfield spread its silken green tapestry; on the other a pasture was empty, close-cropped, rising to a coronal of towering chestnuts. The road, in either direction, was deserted.

Anthony heard a sigh of contentment at his back: relaxed from the tension of driving, he removed his cap and, with crossed legs, contemplated the sylvan quiet. He watched a flock of blackbirds wheeling above the apple tree, and decided that they had been within easy shot.

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"Look over your head!" she cried suddenly; "what gorgeous apples."

He rose and, measuring the distance in a swift glance, jumped and caught hold of a limb, by means of which he drew himself up into the tree. He mounted rapidly, filling his cap with crimson apples; when his pockets were full he paused. Down through the screen of leaves he could see her upturned countenance, framed in the broad white hat; her expression was severely impersonal; yet, viewed from that informal angle, she did not appear displeased. And, when he had descended, she picked critically among the store he offered. She rolled back the gloves upon her wrists and bit largely, with youthful gusto. On the road, after a moment's hesitation, Anthony embarked upon the consumption of the remainder. He strolled a short distance from the car and found a seat upon a low stone wall.

XXXV

SOON, he saw, she too left the car, and passed him, apparently ignorant of his presence. But, upon her return, she stopped and indicated with her foot some feathery plants growing in a ditch by the road. "Horsetails," she declared; "they are Paleozoic . . . millions of years old."

"They look fresh and green still," he observed.

She glanced at him coldly, but his expression was entirely serious. "I mean the species, of course. Father has fossils of the Devonian period . . . they were trees then." She chose a place upon the wall, ten feet or more from him, and sat with insolent self-possession, whistling an inconsequential tune. There was absolutely no pose about her, he decided; she possessed a masculine carelessness in regard to him. She leaned back, propped upon her arms, and the frank, flowing line of her full young body was like the June day in its uncorseted freedom and beauty.

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"If you will get that package from the confectioner's—" she suggested finally. She unfolded the paper and exposed a row of small cakes, which she divided rigorously in two; rewrapping one division, she held it out toward him.

"No, no," he protested seriously. "I'm not hungry."

"It's past two," she informed him, "and we can't possibly be back in time for luncheon. I'd rather not hold this out any longer." He relieved her without further words. "Two brioche and two babas," she enumerated. He resumed his place, and then consumed the cakes without further speech.

"The study of biology," she informed him later, with a gravity appropriate to the subject, "makes a great many small distinctions seem absurd. When you get accustomed to thinking in races, and in millions of years, the things your friends fuss about seem absurd. And so, if you like, why, smoke."

It was his constant plight that, between the for-

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mal restrictions of his position and the vigorous novelty of her speech, Anthony was continually at a loss. "Perhaps," he replied inanely; "I know nothing about those things."

She flashed over him a candid, amber gaze that singularly resembled her father's. "You are not at all acquisitive," she informed him; "and it's perfectly evident that you are the poorest sort of chauffeur. You drive very nicely," she continued with severe justice. "One could trust you in a crisis; but it is little things that make a chauffeur, and in the little things"—she paused to indicate a globe of cigarette smoke that instantly dissolved—"you are like—that."

He moodily acknowledged to himself the truth of her observation, but such acumen he considered entirely unnecessary in one so young; he did not think it becoming. He contrasted her, greatly to her detriment, with the elusive charm of Eliza Dreen; the girl before him was too vivid, too secure; he felt instinctively that she was entirely free from the bonds, the conventions, that held the majority of girls within recognized, conven-

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ient limits. Her liberty of mind upset a balance to which both heredity and experience had accustomed him. The entire absence of a tacitly recognized masculine superiority subconsciously made him uneasy, and he took refuge in imponderable silence.

"Besides," she continued airily, "you are too physically normal to think; all normal people are stupid. . . . You are like one of those wood creatures in the classic pastorals."

A faint grin overspread Anthony's countenance; among so many unintelligible words he had regained his poise—this was the usual, the familiar feminine chatter, endless, inconsequential, by means of which all girls presented the hopeless tangle of their thoughts and emotions; its tone had deceived him only at the beginning.

In the stillness which followed, other blackbirds, equally within shot, winged over the apple tree; the shadow of the boughs crept farther and farther down the road. She rose vigorously. "I must get back," she announced. She remained silent during the return, but Anthony, with the

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sense of direction cultivated during countless days in the fields and swales, found the way without hesitation.

When she left the car he slowly backed and circled to the carriage house. As he splashed body and wheels with water, polished the metal, dried and dusted the cushions, the crisp, cool voice of Annot Hardinge rang in his ears. He divined something of her isolated existence, her devotion to the absorbed, kindly man who was her father, and speculated upon her matured youth. She recalled his sister Ellie, for whose inflexible integrity he cherished a deep-seated admiration; but both left him cold before the poignant tenderness of Eliza . . . Eliza, the unforgettable, who loved him.

XXXVI

AFTER an unsubstantial dinner of grilled sweetbreads and mushrooms and a frozen pudding, he continued his interrupted letter:

"But there isn't any use in my trying to write my love in words; it won't go into words, even inside of me I can't explain it—it seems as if instead of its being a part of me that I am a part of it, of something too big for me to see the end of." Then he became practical, and wrote optimistically of the things that were soon to be.

There was a letter box at the upper corner of the street, and, passing the porch, he saw the biologist sunk in an attitude of profound dejection. His daughter sat, with bare arms and neck, at his side; her hair was bound in a gleaming mass about her ears, and one hand was laid upon the man's shoulder, while she patted Thomas Huxley with the other. The dog rose, growling belligerently at the unfamiliar figure, but sank

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again beneath a sharp command. When Anthony returned, Rufus Hardinge greeted him and turned to his daughter with a murmured suggestion, but she shook her head in decisive negation. A light shone palely in the long windows at their back. The sun, at its skyey evening toilette, seemed, in the rosy glow of westering candles, to scatter a cloud of powdered gold over the worn and huddled shoulders of the world.

Suddenly, seemingly in reconsideration of her decision, she called, "Oh, Anthony!" and he retraced his steps to the porch. "My father suggests that you sit here," she told him distantly. "He says that you are very young, and that solitude is not good for you."

"Annot," the older man protested humorously, "you have mangled my intent beyond any recognition." With an unstudied, friendly gesture he tended Anthony his cigar case. A deep preoccupation enveloped him; he sat with loose hands and unseeing eyes. In the deepening twilight his countenance was grey. Anthony had taken a position upon the edge of the porch, his feet in

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the fragrant grass, out of which fireflies rose glimmering, mounting higher and higher, until, finally, they disappeared into the night above, in the pale birth of the stars.

A deep silence enfolded them until, in an unexpected, low voice, Rufus Hardinge repeated mechanically aloud lines called, evidently, out of a memory of long ago:

“Within thy beams, Oh, Sun! or who could find,
While fly, and leaf, and insect stood revealed,
That too—”

He paused, groping in his memory for the words:
“That too such countless orbs thou madst us
blind.”

The girl rose, and drew his head into her warm, young arms. “Don’t, father,” she cried, in a sudden, throbbing apprehension; “please . . . please. You have the clearest, most beautiful eyes in the world. Think of all they have seen and understood—”

He patted her absently. Anthony moved silently away.

XXXVII

NOT long after, at breakfast, the young and disdainful maid conveyed to Anthony a request to proceed, when he had finished, to the conservatory. There he discovered Annot Hardinge, with her sleeves rolled up above her vigorous elbows, dusting with a fine brown powder the rows of monotonous potted plants. She directed him to follow her with a slender-nosed watering pot. He wondered silently at the featureless display of what he found to be ordinary bean plants, some of the dwarf variety, others drawn up against the wall. They bore, in exact, minute inscriptions, strange names and titles, cryptic numbers; some, he saw, were labelled "Dominants," others, "Recessives."

"The 'cupids' are doing wretchedly, poor dears!" she exclaimed before a row of dwarf sweet peas. "This is my father's laboratory," she told him briefly.

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"I thought he had something to do with Darwin and the missing link."

She gazed at him pityingly from the heights of a vast superiority. "Darwin did some valuable preliminary work," she instructed him; "although Wallace really guessed it all first. Now Mendel, Bateson, are the important names. They were busy with the beginnings; and, among the beginnings, plants are the most suggestive." She indicated a small row of budding sweet peas. "Perhaps, in those flowers, the whole secret of the universe will be found; perhaps the mystery of our souls will be explained; isn't it thrilling! The secret of inheritance may sleep in those buds—if they are white, it will prove . . . oh, a thousand things, and among them that father is the most wonderful scientist alive; it will explain heredity and control it, make a new kind of world possible, a world without the most terrible diseases. What church, what saint, what god, has really done that?" she demanded. "Stupid prigish figures bending out of their gold-plated heavens!"

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Her enthusiasm communicated a thrill to him as he regarded the still, withdrawn mystery of the plants. For the first time he thought of them as alive, as he was alive; he imagined them returning his gaze, his interest, exchanging—critically, in their imperceptible, chaste tongue—their unimpassioned opinions of him. It was a disturbing possibility that the secret of his future, of life and death, might lurk in the flowers to unfold on those slender stems. He was oppressed by a feeling of a world crowded with invisible living forms, of fields filled with billions of grassy inhabitants, of seas, mountains, made up of interlocking and contending lives; every breath, he felt, absorbed races of varied individuals. He thought, too, of people as plants, as roses—Oh, Eliza!—as nettles, rank weeds, crimson lilies. And, vaguely, this hurt him; something valuable, something sustaining, vanished from his unformulated, instinctive conception of life; the world of men, their aims, their courage, ideals, lost their peculiar beauty, their importance; the past, rising from the mold through

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those green tubes and vanishing into a future of dissolving gases, shrunk, stripped of its glamour, to an affair of little moment.

Outside, as he descended the lawn, the sun had the artificial glitter of an incandescent light; the trees waved their arms at him threateningly. Then, with a shrug of his normal young shoulders, he relinquished the entire conception; he forgot it. He recklessly permeated a universe of airy atoms with the smoke of a Dulcina. "That's a woolly delusion," he pronounced.

That evening he burnished the car, and mounted the ladder to his room late. But the evening following, detained to perform a trivial task, he was seated upon the porch, enveloped in the fragrant clouds of Habana leaf.

XXXVIII

ANNOT, as now he mentally termed her, dressed in the inevitable yellow, was swinging a satin slipper on the point of her foot; her father was, if possible, more greyly withdrawn than before.

"To-night," the biologist finally addressed his daughter, "your mother has been dead eighteen years. . . . She hated science; she said it had destroyed my heart. Impossible—a purely functionary pump. The illusions of emotions are cerebro-spinal reflexes, only that. She said that I cared more for science than—than herself." He raised his head sharply, "I was forced to tell her the truth, in common honor: science first. . . . Tears are an automatic escapement to protect the vision. But women have no logic, little understanding; hopelessly romantic, a false quantity—romance, dangerous. I was away when she died

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. . . Borneo, Aurignacian strata had been discovered, a distinct parallel with the Maurer jaw. Death is only a change of chemical activity," he shot at Anthony in a voice not entirely steady, "the human entity a passing agglomeration, kinetic. . . . Love is a mechanical principle, categorically imperative." His voice sank, became diffuse. "Absolute science, selfless.

"People found her beautiful; I didn't know," he added wistfully. "Beauty is a vague term. The Chapelle skull is beautiful, as I understand it—as I understand it. In a letter to me"—after a long pause—"she employed the term 'frozen to death'; she said that I had frozen her to death. Only a figure, romantic, inexact."

"Stuff!" Annot exclaimed lightly, but her anxious countenance contradicted the spirit of her tones. "You mustn't stir about in old troubles. Everything great demands sacrifice; mother didn't quite understand; and I expect she got lonely, poor dear."

Anthony rose, and made his way somberly toward the stable, but running feet, his name called

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in low, urgent tones, arrested his progress. Annot approached with the trouble deepened in her gaze. "Does he seem entirely himself to you?" she asked. But, before he could answer, "Of course, you don't know him well enough. You see, he is working too much again—an average of sixteen hours for the ten days past. I haven't said anything, because the most difficult part of his work is at an end. If his last conclusions are right, he will have only to scribble the reports, put a book together. . . . I can always tell when he is overworked, by the cobwebs—he tries to brush them off his face," she explained. "They don't exist, of course.

"But I really wanted to say this." She lifted her candid gaze to his face. "Could you be a little more about the house? we might need you; we'll use the car very little for a while." The apprehension was clearly visible now. "Would you mind helping him with his clothes? he gets them mixed. It isn't regular, I know," she told him; "but we have a great deal of money; anything you required—"

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"Perhaps I'd be better at that," he suggested.
"You know, you said I was a rotten chauffeur."

For a moment, appealing, she had seemed nearer to him, but now she retreated spiritually, slipped behind her cold indifference. "There will be nothing more to-night; if he grows worse, you will have to move into the house." She left him abruptly, gathering her filmy skirt from the grass, an elusive shape with gleams on her hair, her arms and neck white for an instant and then veiled in the scarf of night.

In his room he could still hear, mingled with the faint, muffled squeaking of the mice in the empty hayloft, Hardinge's voice, jerky, laborious, "a categorical imperative . . . categorical imperative." He wondered what that meant, applied to love? An errant air brought him the unmistakable odor of white lilacs, an ineffable impression of Eliza.

XXXIX

THE day following found him installed in the house, in a small chamber formed where the tower fronted upon the third story. At luncheon a place was laid for him at the table with Annot and her father, where the attentions of the disdainful and shapely maid positively quivered with suppressed scorn. Anthony had found in his room fifty dollars in an envelope, upon which Annot had scribbled that he might need a few things; and, at liberty in the afternoon, he boarded an electric car for the city, where he invested in fresh and shining pumps and other necessities.

The house was dark when he inserted his newly acquired latchkey in the front door and made his way softly aloft. But a thread of light was shining under the door of Rufus Hardinge's study. Later—he had just turned out the light—a short knock fell upon his door. "Me," An-

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not answered his instant query. "I am going to ask you to dress and come to my father. It may be unnecessary; he may go quietly to bed; but go he must."

He found her in a dressing gown that fell in heavy, straight folds of saffron satin, her feet thrust into quaint Turkish slippers with curled points; over her shoulders slipped and slid the coppery rope of her hair. She led the way to the study, which she entered without knocking. Anthony saw the biologist bent over pages spread in the concentrated light of a greenshaded globe. In a glass case against the wall some moldy bones were mounted and labelled; fragmentary and sinister-appearing casts gleamed whitely from a stand; and, everywhere, was the orderly confusion of books and papers that had distinguished the library.

"Come, Rufus." Annot laid her hand upon his shoulder. "It's bedtime for all scientists. You promised me you would be in by eleven."

He gazed at her with the hasty regard directed at an ill-timed, casual stranger. "Yes, yes," he

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ejaculated impatiently, "get to bed. I'll follow . . . some crania tracings, prognathic angles—"

"To-morrow will do for those," she insisted gently. "You are making yourself ill again—"

"Nonsense," he interrupted; "never felt better in my life, never——" His voice dwindled abruptly to silence, as though a door had been closed on him; his lips twisted impotently; beads of sweat stood out upon his white, strained forehead. His whole body was rigid in an endeavor to regain his utterance. He rose, and would have fallen if Annot's arm had not slipped about his shoulders. Anthony hurried forward, and, supporting him on either side, they assisted him into the sleeping chamber beyond. There, as he lay at full length on a couch, a sudden marble-like immobility fell upon his features, his mouth slightly open, his hands clenched. Annot busied herself swiftly, while Anthony descended into the dark, still house in search of ice. When he returned, Hardinge was pronouncing disconnected words, terms. "Eoliths," he said, "snow line . . . one hundred and thirty millimeters." He

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was silent for a moment; then, struggling into a sitting posture, "Annot!" he cried sharply, "I've frightened you again. Only a touch of . . . aphasia; unfortunately not new, my dear, but not serious."

Later, when Anthony had assisted him in the removal of his clothes and lowered the light, he found Annot in the study assembling the papers scattered on the table. "I am glad that you are here," she said simply. "Soon he can have a complete rest." She sank into a chair; he had had no idea that she could appear so lovely: her widely-opened eyes held flecks of gold; beneath the statuesque fall of the dressing gown her bare ankles were milky-white.

XL

HE felt strangely at ease in a setting so easily strange. There was a palpable flavor of unreality in the moment, of detachment from the commonplace round of existence; it was without connection, without responsibility to yesterday or to to-morrow; he was isolated with the informal vision of Annot in an hour which seemed neither day nor night. He felt—inarticulately—divorced from his customary daily personality; and, with no particular need for speech, lit a cigarette and blew clouds of smoke at the ceiling. It was his companion who interrupted this mood.

“The life that people think so tremendously important,” she observed, “the things one does, are hardly more real than a suit of clothes, with religion for a nice, prim white collar, gloves for morals, and a hidden red silk handkerchief for a

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rare revolt. And all the time, politely ignored, decently covered, our bodies are underneath. Now and then some one slips out of his covering, and stands bare before his shocked and protesting friends, but they soon hurry something about him, a conventional shawl, a moral sheet. Do you happen to remember a wonderful caricature of Louis XIV—simply a wig, a silk suit, buckled shoes, and a staff?"

The mordant humor of that drawing penetrated Anthony's understanding: he saw rooms, streets, a world full of gesticulating suits, dresses, nodding hats, bonnets; he saw the unsubstantial concourse haughtily erect, condescending, cunningly deceptive, veiling in a thousand subterfuges their essential emptiness. The thought evaporated in laughter at the obvious humor of such a spectacle; its social significance missed him totally, happily.

"What an unthinking person you are," she told him; "you just—live. It's rather remarkable—one of Bacchus' company caught in the modern streets. It is all so different now," she added plaintively; "men get drunk in saloons or

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at dinner, and the purple stain of the grape centers in their noses. "I tried myself," she confessed, "in Geneva. I was with a specialist who had father. The café balcony overhung the lake; it was at night, and the villages looked like clusters of fireflies about a black mirror; and you simply never saw so many stars. We were looking for a lyric sensation, but it was the most awful fizzle; he insisted on describing an operation with all the grey and gory details complete, and I fell fast asleep."

The outcome of her experiment tallied exactly with that of his own more involuntary efforts in that field. It established in his mind a singularly direct sympathy with her; the uneasy element which her attitude had called up in him disappeared entirely, its place taken by a comfortable sense of freedom, a total lack of *rot*.

She rose, vanishing into her father's room; then, coming to the door, nodded shortly, and left for the night.

He found on the bureau in his tower room what remained of the fifty dollars—it had been reduced to less than eight. Suddenly he remem-

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bered his purpose there, his supreme need of money, the imperative westward call. . . . He bitterly cursed his lax character as he recalled the cigars he had purchased, the silk shirt too, and an unnecessary tie. A deep gloom settled upon his spirit. He heard in retrospect his father's clear, high voice—"shiftless, no sense of responsibility." He sat miserably on the edge of the bed in the dark, while the petty, unbroken procession of past failures wheeled through his brain. Then the shining vision of Eliza, compassionate, tender, folded him in peace; one by one he would subdue those rebellious elements in himself, of fate, that held them apart.

XLI

AT a solitary breakfast the incident of the preceding night seemed fantastic, unreal; he retained the broken, vivid memory of the scene, the thrill of vague words, that lingers disturbingly into the waking world from a dream. And, when he saw Annot later, there was no trace of a consequent informality in her manner; she was distant, hedged about by an evident concern for her father. "I have sent for Professor Jamison." She addressed Anthony with blank eyes. "Please be within call in case—"

He saw the neurologist as the latter circled the plaster cupids to the entrance of the house—a heavy man with a broad, smooth face, thin-lipped like a priest, with staring yellow gloves. Anthony remained in the lower hall, but no demand for his assistance sounded from above. When the specialist descended, he flashed a glance,

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as bitingly swift and cold as glacial water, over Anthony, then nodded in the direction of the garden.

"Miss Annot tells me that you are sleeping in the house," he said when they were outside, "on the chance that she might need you for her father. . . . She will. He is at the point of mental dissolution." An involuntary repulsion possessed Anthony at the detached manner in which the other pronounced these hopeless words. "Nothing may be done; that is—it is not desirable that anything should. I am telling you this so that you can act intelligently. Rufus Hardinge knows it; there was a consultation at Geneva, which he approved.

"He is," he continued with a warmer, more personal note, "a very distinguished biologist; his investigations, his conclusions, have been invaluable." He glanced at an incongruous, minute jewelled watch on his wrist, and continued more quickly. "Ten years ago he should have stopped all work, vegetated—he was burning up rapidly; merely a reduced amount of labor would have accomplished little for his health or sub-

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ject. And we couldn't spare his labor; no mere prolongation of life would have justified that loss of knowledge, progress. It was his position; he insisted upon it, and we concurred . . . he chose . . . insanity.

"Miss Annot is not aware of this; he must have every moment possible; every note is priceless. The end will come—now, at any time." He had reached the small canary yellow Dreux landaulet waiting for him, and stepped into it with a sharp nod. "You may expect violence," he added, as the car gathered momentum.

But that evening in the dim quietude of the piazza the biologist seemed to have recovered completely his mental poise. He spoke in a buoyant vein of the great men he had known, celebrated names in the world of the arts, in politics and science. He recalled Braisted, the astronomer, searching relaxation in the Boulevard school of French fictionists. "I told him"—he chuckled at the mild, scholastic humor—"that he had been peeping too long at Venus."

Annot was steeped in an inscrutable silence.

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For the first time, Anthony was actually aware of her features: she had a broad, low brow swept by the coppery hair loosely tied at the back; her eyes resembled her father's—they were amber-colored and singularly candid in their interest in all that passed before them; and her nose tilted up slightly above a mouth frankly large. It was the face of a boy, he decided, but felt instantly that he had fallen far short of the fact—the allurement, the perfection, of her youthful maturity hung overwhelmingly about her the challenge of sex.

Rather, she was all girl, he recognized, but of a new variety. A vision of the *nice* girls he had known dominated his vision, flooded his mind, all smiling with veiled eyes, clothed in a thousand reserves, fluttering graces, innocent wiles, with their gaze firmly set toward the shining, desirable goal of matrimony. Eliza was not like that, it was true; but she, from the withdrawn, impersonal height of her cool perfection, was a law to herself. There was a new freedom in Annot's acceptance of life, he realized vaguely,

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as different as possible from mere license; no one, he was certain, would presume with Annot Hardinge: her very frankness offered infinitely less incentive to unlawful thoughts than the conscious modesty of the others.

When the biologist left the piazza Annot turned with a glad gesture to her companion. "He hasn't seemed so well—not for years; his little, gay fun again . . . it's too good to be true. I should like to celebrate—something entirely irresponsible. I have worried, oh, dreadfully." The night was still, moonless; the stars burned like opals in the intense purple deeps of the sky. The air, freighted with the rich fruitage of full summer, hung close and heavy. "It's hot as a blotter," Annot declared. "I think—yes, I'm sure—I should like to go out in the car." She rose. "Will you bring it around, please?"

He drove slowly over the deserted lane by the lawn, and found her, enveloped in the lustrous folds of a black satin wrap, at the front gate. Over her hair she had tied a veil drawn about her brow in a webby filament of flowers. "I think

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I'll sit in front," she decided; "perhaps I'll drive." He waited, at the steering wheel, for directions.

"Go west, young man," she told him, and would say nothing more. A distant bell thinly struck eleven jarring notes as they moved into the flickering gloom of empty streets with the orange blur of lamps floating unsteadily on dim boughs above, and the more brilliant, crackling radiance of the arc lights at the crossings.

The headlights of the automobile cut like white knives through the obscurity of hedged ways; at sudden turnings they plunged into gardens, flinging sharply on the shadowy night vivid glimpses of incredible greenery, unearthly flowers, wafers of white wall. They drove for a long, silent period, with increasing momentum as the way became more open and direct; now they seemed scarcely to touch the uncertain surface below, but to be wheeling through sheer space, flashing their stabbing incandescence into the empty envelopment beyond the worlds.

They passed with a muffled din through the single street of a sleeping village, leaving be-

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hind a confusion of echoes and the startled barking of a dog. Anthony could see Annot's profile, pale and clear, against the flying and formless countryside; the lace about her hair fluttered ceaselessly; and her wrap bellowed and clung about her shoulders, about her gloveless hands folded upon her slim knees. She was splendidly, regally scornful upon the wings of their reckless flight; the throttle was wide open; they swung from side to side, hung on a single wheel, lunged bodily into the air. In the mad ecstasy of speed she rose; but Anthony, clutching her arms, pulled her sharply into the seat. Then, decisively, he shut off the power, the world ceased to race behind them, the smooth clamor of the engine sank to a low vibratone.

"You did that wonderfully," she told him with glowing cheeks, shining eyes; "it was marvellous. A moment like that is worth a life-time on foot . . . laughing at death, at everything that is safe, admirable, moral . . . a moment of the freedom of soulless things, savage and unaccountable to God or society."

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The illuminated face of the clock before him indicated a few minutes past one, and, tentatively, he repeated the time. "How stupid of you," she protested; "silly little footrule of the hours, the conventional measure of the commonplace. For punishment—on and on. Like Columbus' men, you are afraid of falling over the edge of—propriety." She turned to him with solemn eyes. "I assure you there is no edge, no bump or brimstone, no place where good stops and tumbles into bad; it's all continuous—"

He lost the thread of her mocking discourse, and glanced swiftly at her, his brow wrinkled, the shadow of a smile upon his lips. "Heavens! but you are good-looking," she acknowledged, her countenance studiously critical, impersonal. After that, silence once more fell upon them; the machine sang through the dark, lifting over ridges, dropping down declines.

Anthony had long since lost all sense of their position. The cyanite depths of the sky turned grey, cold; there was a feeling in the air of settling dew; a dank mist filled the hollows; the

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color seemed suddenly to have faded from the world. He felt unaccountably weary, inexpressibly depressed; he could almost taste the vapidity of further existence. Annot's hard, bright words echoed in his brain; the flame of his unthinking idealism sank in the thin atmosphere of their logic.

XLII

HE had settled low in the seat, her mouth and chin hidden in the folds of the satin wrap; her face seemed as chill as marble, her youth cruel, disdainful. But her undeniable courage commanded his admiration, the unwavering gaze of her eyes into the dark. He wondered if, behind her crisp defenses, she were happy. He knew from observation that she led an almost isolated existence . . . she had gathered about her no circle of her own age, she indulged in none of the rapturous confidences, friendships, so sustaining to other girls. The peculiar necessities of her father had accomplished this. Yet he was aware that she cherished a general contempt for youth at large; for a majority of the grown, for that matter. Contempt colored her attitude to a large extent: that and happiness did not seem an orderly pair.

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He felt, rather than saw, the influence of the dawn behind him; it was as though the grey air grew more transparent. Annot twisted about. “Oh! turn, turn!” she cried; “the day! we are driving away from it.” A sudden intoxicating freshness streamed like a sparkling birdsong over the world, and Anthony’s dejection vanished with the gloom, now at their backs. Delicate lavender shadows grew visible upon the grass, the color shifted tremulously, like the shot hues of changeable silks, until the sun poured its ore into the verdant crucible of the countryside.

“I am most frightfully hungry,” Annot admitted with that entire frankness which he found so refreshing. “I wonder—” On either hand fields, far farmhouses, reached unbroken to the horizon; before them the road rose between banks of soft brown loam, apparently into the sky. But, beyond the rise, they came upon a roadside store, its silvery boards plastered with the garish advertisements of tobaccos. Its rickety porch was now undergoing a vigorous sweeping at the hands of an old man with insecure legs, upon

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whose faded personage were stamped unmistakably the initials "G. A. R."

Anthony brought the car to a halt and returned his brisk and curious salutation. "Shall I bring out some crackers?" he asked from the road. But she elected to follow him into the store. The interior presented the usual confusion of gleaming tin and blue overalls, monumental cheeses and cards of buttons, a miscellany of ludicrously varied merchandise. Annot found a seat upon a splintered church pew, now utilized as a secular resting place, while Anthony foraged through the shelves. He returned with the crackers, and a gold lump of dates, upon which they breakfasted hugely. "'D ye like some milk?" the aged attendant inquired, and forthwith dipped it out of a deep, cool and ringing can.

Afterward they sat upon the step and smoked matutinal cigarettes. The day gathered in a shimmering haze above the vivid corn, the emerald of the shorn fields; the birds had already subsided from the heat among the leaves. Anthony saw that the lamps of the car were still alight,

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a feeble yellow flicker, and turned them out. He tested the engine; and, finding it still running, turned with an unspoken query to Annot. She rose slowly.

The wrap slipped from her bare shoulders, and her dinner gown with its high sulphur girdle, the scrap of black lace about her hair, presented a strange, brilliantly artificial picture against the blistered, gaunt boards of the store, with, at its back, the open sunny space of pasture, wood, and sky.

“It’s barely twenty miles back,” she told him, once more settled at his side. The old man regarded them from under one gnarled palm, the other tightly clasped about the broom handle; his jaw was dropped; incredulity, senile surprise, claimed him for their own.

With Annot, Anthony reflected, he was everlastingly getting into new situations; she seemed to lift him out of the ordinary course of events into a perverse world of her own, a front-backward land where the unexpected, without rule or obligation, continually happened; and, what was

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strangest of all, without any of the dark consequences which he had been taught must inevitably follow such departures. He recalled the incredulous smiles, the knowing insinuations, that would have greeted the exact recounting of the past night at Doctor Allhop's drugstore. He would himself, in the past, have regarded such a tale as a flimsy fabrication. And suddenly he perceived dimly, in a mind unused to such abstractions, the veil of ugliness, of degradation, that hung so blackly about the thoughts of men. He gazed with a new sympathy and comprehension at the scornful line of Annot's vivid young lips; something of her superiority, her contempt, was communicated to him.

She became aware of his searching gaze, and smiled in an intimate, friendly fashion at him. "You are the most comfortable person alive," she told him. There was nothing critical in her tones now. "I said that you were not a good chauffeur, and—" the surroundings grew familiar, they had nearly reached their destination, and an impalpable reserve fell upon her, but she continued to

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smile at him, "and . . . you are not." That was the last word she addressed to him that day.

As, later, he sluiced the automobile with water, he recalled the strange intimacy of the night, her warm and sympathetic voice; once she had steadied herself with a clinging hand upon his shoulder. These new attributes of the person who, shortly, passed him silently and with cold eyes, stirred his imagination; they were potent, rare, unsettling.

XLIII

NEVERTHELESS, in the days which followed there was a perceptible change in Annot's attitude toward him: she became, as it were, conscious of his actuality. One afternoon she read aloud to him a richly-toned, gloomy tale of Africa. They were sitting by a long window, open, but screened from the summer heat by stiff, darkly-drooping green folds, where they could hear the drip of the fountain in its basin, a cool punctuation on the sultry page of the afternoon. Annot proceeded rapidly in an even, low voice; she was dressed in filmy lavender, with little buttons of golden velvet, an intricately carved gold buckle at her waist.

Anthony listened as closely as possible, the faint smile which seldom left him hovering over his lips. The bald action of the narrative—a running fight with ambushed savages from a little tin pot of a steamer, a mysterious affair in

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the darkness with a grim skeleton of a fellow, stakes which bore a gory fruitage of human heads—held him; but the rest . . . words, words. His attention wavered, fell upon minute, material objects; Annot's voice grew remote, returned, was lost among his juggling thoughts.

"Isn't it splendid!" she exclaimed, at last closing the volume; "the most beautiful story of our time—" She stopped abruptly, and cast a penetrating glance at him. "I don't believe you even listened," she declared. "In your heart you prefer 'Tortured by the Tartars.' "

His smile broadened, including his eyes.

"You are impossible! No," she veered suddenly, "you're not; if you cared for this you wouldn't be . . . you. That's the most important thing in the world. Besides, I wouldn't like you; everybody reads now, it's frightfully common; while you are truly indifferent. Have you noticed, my child, that books always increase where life runs thin? and you are alive, not a papier-mâché man painted in the latest shades."

Anthony dwelt on this unexpected angle upon

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his mental delinquencies. The approval of Annot Hardinge, so critical, so outspoken, was not without an answering glow in his being; no one but her might discover his ignorance to be laudable.

She rose, and the book slipped neglected to the floor. "The mirror of my dressing table is collapsing," she informed him; "I wonder if you would look at it." He followed her above to her room; it was a large four-square chamber, its windows brushed by the glossy leaves of an aged black-heart cherry tree. Her bed was small, with a counterpane of grotesque lace animals, a table held a scattered collection of costly trifles, and a closet door stood open upon a shimmering array from deepest orange to white and pale primrose. An enigmatic lacy garment and a surprisingly long pair of black silk stockings occupied a chair; the table was covered with columns of print on long sheets of paper. "Galleys," she told him. "I read all father's proof."

He moved the dressing table from the wall, and

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discovered upon the floor the bolt which had held the mirror in place.

As he screwed it into position, Annot said: "Don't look around for a minute." There was a swift whisper of skirts, a pause; then, "All right." He straightened up, and found that she had changed to a white skirt and waist. Fumbling in the closet, she produced a pair of low brown shoes and, kicking off her slippers, donned the others, balancing each in turn on the bed.

'Let's go—anywhere,' she proposed; "but principally where books are not and birds are." At a drugstore they purchased largely of licorice root, which they consumed sitting upon a fence without the town.

XLIV

“**I** SAID that instinctively, back in my room,” Annot remarked with a puzzled frown. “It was beastly, really, to feel the necessity . . . as though we had something corrupt to hide. And I feel that you are especially nice—that way. You see, I am not trying to dispose of myself like the clever maidens at the balls and bazaars; my legs and shoulders are quite uncalculated. There is no price on . . . on my person; I’m not fishing for any nice little Christian ceremony. No man will have to pay the price of hats at Easter and furs in the fall, of eternal boredom, for me. All this stuff in the novels about the sacredness of love and constancy is just—stuff! Love isn’t like that really; it’s a natural force, and Nature is always practical: potato bugs and jimson-weed and men, it is the same law for all of them—more potato bugs, more men, that’s all.”

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Anthony grasped only the larger implications of this speech, its opposition to that love which he had felt as a misty sort of glory, as intangible as the farthest star, as fragrant as a rose in the fingers. There was an undeniable weight of solid sense in what Annot had said. She knew a great deal more than himself, more—yes—than Eliza, more than anybody he had before known; and, in the face of her overwhelmingly calm and superior knowledge, his vision of love as eternal, changeless, his ecstatic dreams of Eliza with the dim, magic white lilacs in her arms, grew uncertain, pale. Love, viewed with Annot's clear eyes, was a commonplace occurrence, and marriage the merest material convenience: there was nothing sacred in it, or in anything—death, birth, or herself.

And was not the biologist, with his rows of labelled plants and bones, his courageous questioning of the universe, of God Himself, bigger than the majority of men, with their thin covering of cant, the hypocrisy in which they cloaked their doubts, their crooked politics and business?

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Rufus Hardinge's conception of things, Annot's, reasoning and patent honesty, seemed more probable, more convincing, than the accepted romantic, often insincere, view of living, than the organ-roll-and-stained-glass attitude.

In his new rationalism he eyed the world with gloomy prescience; he had within him the somber sense of slain illusions. All this, he felt, was proper to increasing years and experience; yet, between them, they emptied the notable bag of licorice.

Annot rested a firm palm upon his shoulder and sprang to the ground, and they walked directly and silently back. "It's a mistake to discuss things," Annot discovered to him from the door of her room: "they should be lived. Thus Zarathustrina."

XLV

LATER they were driven from the porch by a heavy and sudden shower, a dark flood torn in white streamers and pennants by wind gusts; and they entered through a long window a formal chamber seldom occupied. A thick white carpet bore a scattered design in pink and china blue; oil paintings of the Dutch school, as smooth as ice, hung in massive gold frames; a Louis XVI clock, intricately carved and gilded, rested upon a stand enamelled in black and vermillion, inlaid with pagodas and fantastic mandarins in ebony and mother-of-pearl and camphor wood. At intervals petulant and sweet chimes rang from the clock: trailing silvery bubbles of sound that burst in plaintive ripples.

Rufus Hardinge sat with bowed head, his lips moving noiselessly. Annot occupied a chair of sweeping yellow lines, that somehow suggested to Anthony a swan. “Father has had a tiresome

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letter from Doctor Grundlowe at Bonn," she informed the younger man.

"He disagrees with me absolutely," Hardinge declared. "But Caprera at Padova disagrees with him; and Markley, at Glasgow, contravenes us all."

"It's about a tooth," Annot explained.

"The line to the anterior-posterior diameter is simian," the biologist asserted. "The cusps prove nothing, but that forward slope—" He half rose from his chair, his eyes glittering wrathfully at Anthony, but fell back trembling. . . . "Simian," he muttered.

"A possible difference of millions of years in human history," Annot added further.

"But can't they agree at all?" Anthony exclaimed; "don't they know anything? That's an awful long time."

"A hundred million years," the elder interrupted with a contemptuous gesture—"nothing, a moment. I place the final glacial two hundred and seventy million after Jenner, and we have agreed to dismiss it; trifling, adventitious.

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There are more fundamental discrepancies," he admitted. "Unless something definite is discovered, a firm base established, a single ray of light let into a damnable dark—" He stopped, torn with febrile excitement; then, scarcely audible, continued—"our lives, our work . . . will be of less account than the blood of Oadacer, spilt on barbaric battle-fields."

The rain ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Anthony followed Annot to the porch. In the black spaces between the swiftly shifting clouds stars shone brilliantly; there was a faint drip from the trees. "He gets dreadfully depressed," she interpreted her parent to him. "They wrangle all the time, exactly like a lot of schoolgirls. You have no idea of the bitterness, the jealousy, the contemptuous personalities in the Quarterlies. Really, they are as fanatical, as narrow, as the churches they ignore; they are quite like Presbyterian biologists and Catholic." She sighed lightly. "They leave little for a youngish person to dream on. You are so superior—to ignore these centessimo affairs. Will you lean from the

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edge of your cloud and smile on a daughter of the earth in last year's dinner gown?"

It was, he told himself, nonsense; yet he was moved to make no easy reply—something in her voice, illusive and wistful, made that impossible. "It's very good-looking," he said impotently.

"I'm glad you like it," she told him simply. 'M'sieur Paret fitted it himself while an ante-room full of women hated me. Oh, Anthony!' she exclaimed, "I'd love to wander with you down that brilliant street and through the Place Vendome to the Seine. Better still—there's a little shop on the Via Cavour in Florence where they sell nothing but chocolate, chocolate, chocolate, the most heavenly cakes with black hearts and the most heavenly smell. And you'd like Spain, so fierce and hot against its dusty hills; and Cortina, green beneath its red mountains. We could get a porter and rucksacks, and walk—" She broke off, her hands pressed to her cheeks, a dawning dismay in her eyes. Then she was gone, with a flutter of the skirt so carefully draped by M'sieur Paret.

XLVI

THE pictures of far places had stirred him but slightly: but to travel with Annot, to see anything with Annot, would offer continual amusement and surprise; her vigorous candor, her freedom from sham and petty considerations, enveloped the most commonplace perspectives in an atmosphere of high novelty. The trace of the vagabond, the detachment of the born dweller in tents, woven so picturesquely through his being, responded to her careless indifference to the tyranny of an established and timid scheme of existence.

The following day her old, bright hardness had returned: she railed at him in French, in German, in Italian; she called him the solemn shover, Sir Anthony Absolute. And, holding Thomas Huxley's head directed toward him, she recommended that resigned quadruped to emulate Anthony's austere and inflexible virtues.

XLVII

BUT there was no trace of gayety in the excited and subdued tones in which, later, she called him into the hothouse. He found her bending tense with emotion over the row of plants upon whose flowering such incalculable things depended. “Look!” she cried, taking his hand and drawing him down over the green shoots, where his cheek brushed her hair, where he felt the warm stir of her breathing. “Look! they are in full bud; to-morrow they will burst open.” She straightened up, his hand still held in hers, and a shadow fell upon her vivid countenance. “If his reasoning is wrong, this experiment . . . like all the others, it will kill him. They *must* be white: it would be too cruel, too senseless, not. I am afraid,” she said simply; “nature is so terrible, a Juggernaut, crushing everything to dust beneath its wheeling centuries. I am glad that you are

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here, Anthony." She drew closer to him; her breast swelled in a sharp, tempestuous breath.

"I have been lonelier than I—I realized. I am dreadfully worried about father. They have lied to me; things are worse, I can see that. You have to dress him like a child; I know how considerate you are; you are bright, new gold with the clearest ring in the world.

"We must get a real chauffeur; you have never been that . . . in my thoughts. You know," she laughed happily, "I said in the beginning that you were a miserable affair in details of that kind."

A feeling of guilt rose swiftly within him, which, unwilling to acknowledge, he strove to beat down from his thoughts. But, above his endeavor, grew the clear conviction that he should immediately tell Annot his purpose in driving Rufus Hardinge's car. He must not victimize her generosity, nor take profit from the friendship she offered him so unreservedly. He was dimly conscious that the revelation of his design would end the pleasant intimacy growing up be-

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tween them; the mere mention of Eliza must destroy their happy relations; girls, even Annot, were like that.

He wondered, suddenly cold, if this spelled disloyalty to Eliza! but he angrily refuted that whispered insinuation. His love for Eliza was as unassailably above all other considerations as she herself shone starlike over a petty, stumbling humanity. White and withdrawn and fine, she inhabited the skies of his aspirations. He endeavored now to capture her in his imagination, his memory; and she smiled at him palely, as from a very great distance. He realized that in the past few days he had not had that subtle sense of her nearness, he had not been conscious of that drifting odor of lilacs; and suddenly he felt impoverished, alone.

Annot smiled, warm and near.

"You are awfully kind," he temporized; "but hadn't we better let the thing stand as it is? You see—I want money."

"But you may have that now; whatever you want."

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“No. You are so good, it’s hard to explain—I want money that I earn; real money; I couldn’t think of taking any other from you.”

“Anthony, my good bourgeois! I had thought you quite without that sort of tin pride. Besides, I am not giving it to you; after all, it’s father’s, to use as he likes.”

“But I must give him something for it—”

“Do you suppose you are giving us nothing?” she interrupted him warmly; “you have brought us your clear, beautiful spirits, absolutely without price. Why, you can make father laugh; have you any idea how rarely he did that? When you imitate Margaret, absolutely I can see her fat, white stockings. And your marvellous unworldliness—” She shook her head mournfully. “I fear that this is mere calculation; surely you must know the value of your innocent charms.”

Anthony stood with a lowered head, floundering mentally among his warring inclinations; when, almost with relief, he saw that she had noiselessly vanished.

XLVII

HE slept uneasily, and woke abruptly to a room flooded with sunlight, and an unaccountable sense of something gone wrong. He dressed hurriedly, and had opened his door, when he heard his name called from below. It was Annot, he knew, but her voice was strange, terrified—a helpless cry new to her accustomed poise. “Anthony! Anthony!” she called from the conservatory.

Rufus Hardinge, who, it was evident from his clothes, had not been in bed, was standing rigidly before the row of plants upon whose flowering they had so intently waited. And, in a rapid glance, Anthony saw that they had blossomed in delicate, parti-colored petals—some pale lavender, others deep purple, still others reddish white. Annot’s yellow wrap was thrown carelessly about her nightgown, her feet were bare, and her hair

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hung in a tangle about her blanched face.

When Anthony entered she clung to his arm, and he saw that she was trembling violently. For a tense moment they were silent: the sun streamed over the mathematical plant ranks and lit the white or blue tickets tied to their stems; a bubbling chorus of birds filled the world of leaves without. "It's all wrong," she sobbed.

"So!" the biologist finally said with a wry smile; "you see that I have not solved the riddle of the universe; inheritance in pure line is not explicated. . . . A life of labor as void as any prostitute's; not a single fact, not a supposition warranted, not a foot advanced."

With a sudden and violent movement for which they were entirely unprepared he swept the row of plants crashing upon the floor; where, in a scattered heap of brown loam, broken pottery, smeared bloom, their tenuous, pallid roots quivered in air. "Games with plants and animals and bones for elderly children; riddles without answer . . . blind ways." His expression grew furtive, cunning. "I have been trifled with," he

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declared, "I have been deliberately misled; but I desire to say that I see through—through Him: I comprehend His little joke. It's in bad taste . . . to leave a soul in the dark, blundering about in the cellar with the table spread above. But in the end I was not completely bamboozled. He was not quick enough . . . the hem of His garment.

"Your mother saw Him clear. She was considered beautiful, but beauty's a vague term. Perhaps if I saw her now it would be clearer to me. But I'll tell you His little joke"—he lowered his voice confidentially—"it's all true—that apocalyptic heaven; there's a big book, trumpets, angels, all complete, singing Gregorian chants. What a sell!" He laughed, a gritty, mirthless performance.

"Come up to your room, father," Annot urged; "his arm, Anthony." Anthony placed his hand gently upon the biologist's shoulder, but the latter wrenched himself free. Suddenly, with a choked cry and arms swinging like flails, he launched himself upon the orderly plants. Before he could

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be stopped, row upon row splintered on the floor; he fought, struggled with them as though they were animate opponents, cursed them in a high, raving voice. Anthony quickly lifted him, pinning his arms to his sides. Annot had turned away, her shoulders shaking with sobs.

Rufus Hardinge's struggling unexpectedly ceased, his countenance regained completely its habitual quietude. "I shall begin once more, at the beginning," he whispered, infinitely wistful. "The little ray of light . . . germ of understanding. The scientific problem of the future"—his speech became labored, thick—"scientific . . . future. Other avenue of progress:

"Gentlemen, the Royal Society, a paper on, on—Tears, gentlemen . . . not only automatic. . . ." His voice sank to a mere incomprehensible babble. Anthony carried him to his bed, while Annot telephoned for the neurologist.

After the specialist had gone Annot came in to where Anthony waited in the study. Her feet were thrust into the Turkish slippers, her hair twisted into a hasty knot, but otherwise she had

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not changed. She came swiftly, with pale lips and eyes brilliantly shining from dark hollows, to his side. "His wonderful brain is dead," she told him. "Professor Jamison thinks there will be only a few empty years to the end. But actually it's all over." In a manner utterly incomprehensible to him she was crying softly in his arms.

He must lead her to a chair, he told himself, release her at once. Yet she remained with her warm young body pressed against him, the circle of her arms about his neck, her tears wet upon his cheek. He stepped back, but she would have fallen if he had not continued to support her. His brain whirled under the assault, the surrender, of her dynamic youth. Their mouths met . . . were bruised in kissing.

XLIX

HE stood with bowed shoulders, twisting lips; and, after a momentary pause, she fled from the room. Cold waves of self-hatred flowed over him—he had taken a despicable advantage of her grief. The pleasant fabric of the past unthinking days, the new materialism with its comfortable freedom from restraint, crumbled from an old, old skeleton whose moldering lines spelled the death of all—his heart knew—that was high, desirable, immaculate. He wondered if, like Rufus Hardinge's, his understanding had come too late. But, in the re-surge of his adoration for Eliza, infinitely more beautiful and serene from the pit out of which he sped his vision, he was possessed by the conviction that nothing created nor void should extinguish the bright flame of his passion, hold them separate.

In the midst of his turmoil he recalled Eliza

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with relief, with delight, with tumultuous longing. He soared on the wings of his ecstasy; but descended abruptly to the practical necessities which confronted him. He must leave the Hardinges immediately; with a swift touch of the humorous spirit native to him, he realized that again he should be without money. Then, more seriously, he considered his coming interview with Annot.

The house was charged with the vague unrest, the strange aspect of familiar things, wrought by serious illness. Luncheon was disorganized, Annot was late. She was pale, but, under an obvious concern, she radiated a suppressed content. She laid a letter before Anthony. "Registered," she told him. "I signed." It was, he saw, from his father, and he slipped it into his pocket, intent upon the explanation which lay before him. It would be more difficult, even, than he had anticipated: Annot spoke of the near prospect of a Mediterranean trip if Rufus Hardinge rallied sufficiently. "He is as contented and gentle as a nice old lady," she reported. Then, with a subtle expansion of manner, "It will be such fun—I

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shall take you by the hand: ‘This, my good infant, is one of Virgil’s final resting places. . . .’”

“That would be splendid,” he acknowledged, “but I’m afraid I sha’n’t be able to go. The fact is that—that I had better leave you. I can’t take your money for . . . for . . .”

She glanced at him swiftly, under the shadow of a frown, then shook her head at him. “That tiresome money again! It’s a strange thing for you to insist on; material considerations are ordinarily as far as possible from your thoughts. I forbid you absolutely to mention it again; every time you do I shall punish you—I shall present you with a humiliating gold piece in person.”

“I should be all kinds of a trimmer to take advantage of your goodness. No, I must go—”

The gay warmth evaporated from her countenance as abruptly as though it had been congealed in a sudden icy breath; she sat motionless, upright, enveloping him in the bright resentment of her gaze.

“And I must ask you to forgive me for . . . for this morning,” he stumbled hastily on.

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The resentment burned into a clear flame of angry contempt. “‘For this morning’! because I kissed you?”

He made a vehement gesture of denial. “Oh, no!” But she would not allow him to finish. “But I did,” she announced in a hard, determined voice. ‘It isn’t necessary for you to be polite; I don’t care a damn for that sickening sort of thing. I did, and you are properly and modestly retreating. I believe that you think I am—‘designing,’ isn’t that the word? that you might have to marry me. A kiss, I am to realize, is something sacred. Bah! you make me ill, like almost everything else in life.

“If you think for a minute that it was anything more than the expression of a passing impulse, you are beyond words. And, if it had been more, you—you violet, I wouldn’t marry you; I wouldn’t marry any man, ever! ever! ever! I might have gone to Italy with you, but probably come home with some one else—will that get into your pretty prejudices?”

“If you had gone to Italy with me,” he de-

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clared sullenly, "you would never have come home with anybody else."

"That sort of thing has been dismissed to the smaller rural towns and the cheap melodramas; it's no longer considered elevated to talk like that, but only pitiful. You will start next on 'God's noblest creation,' and purity, and the females of your family. Don't you know, haven't you been told, that the primitive religious rubbish about marriage has been laughed out of existence? Did you dream that I wanted to *keep* you? or that I would allow you to keep me after the thing had got stale? It makes me cold all over to be so frightfully misunderstood. Oh, it's unthinkable!"

"Fi, to kiss you! wasn't it loose of me?"

Her contemptuous periods stung him in a thousand minute places. "I told you," he retorted hotly, "that I wanted to make money; I don't want it given to me; it's for my wedding."

"Of course, how stupid of me not to have guessed—the lips sacred to her." Her own trembled ever so slightly, but her scornful attitude, her direct, bright gaze, were maintained. "A knight

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errant adventuring for a village queen with her handkerchief in his sleeve and tempted by the inevitable Kundry."

He settled himself to weathering this feminine storm; he owed her all the relief to be found in words. "I wanted the money to go West," he particularized further. "There's a position waiting for me—"

"It's all very chaste," she told him, "but terribly commonplace. I think that I don't care to hear the details." She addressed herself to what remained of the luncheon. "Have some more sauce," she advised coolly, then rang. "The pudding, Jane," she directed.

"You have been wonderfully kind—" he began. But she halted him abruptly. "We'll drop all that," she pronounced, and deliberately lit a cigarette.

A genuine admiration for her possessed Anthony; he recognized that she was extraordinarily good to look at; he had had no idea that so vigorous a spirit could have burned behind a becoming dress by Paret. He realized with a faint re-

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gret, eminently masculine, that other men, men of moment, would find her irresistibly attractive. Already it seemed incredible that she had ever been familiar, intimate, tender, with him.

"You will be wanting to leave," she said, rising; "—whenever you like. I have written for a—a chauffeur. I think you should have—it's twenty-five dollars, isn't it?"

"Not twenty-five cents," he returned.

"I shouldn't like to force your delicate sensibilities." She left the room. He caught a last glimpse of her firm young profile; her shining coppery hair; her supple, upright carriage.

L

IN his room he assembled the battered clothing in which Rufus Hardinge had discovered him, preparatorily to changing from his present more elaborate garb, but a sudden realization of the triviality of that course, born of the memory of Annot's broad disposition, halted him midway. Making a hasty bundle of his personal belongings, he descended from the tower room. Through an open door he could see the still white face of the biologist looming from a pillow, and the trim form of a nurse.

Thomas Huxley lay somnolently on the porch, beside Annot's coffee-colored wicker chair and a yellow paper book which bore a title in French. He paused on the street, gazing back, and recalled his first view of the four-square ugly house in its coat of mustard-colored paint, the grey, dripping cupids of the fountain, the unknown girl with yellow silk stockings. Already he seemed to have

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crossed the gulf which divided it all from the present: its significance faded, its solidity dissolved, dropped behind, like a scene viewed from a car window. He turned, obsessed by the old, familiar impatience to hurry forward, the feeling that all time, all energy, all plans and thoughts, were vain that did not lead directly to—

A sudden and unaccountable sensation of cold swept over him, a profound emotion stirring in response to an obscure, a hidden cause. Then, with a rush, returned the feeling of Eliza's nearness: he *heard* her, the little, indefinable noises of her moving; he felt the unmistakable thrill which she alone brought. There was a vivid sense of her hand hovering above his shoulder; her fingers *must* descend, rest warmly. . . . God! how did she get here? He whirled about . . . nothing against the low stone wall that bounded a sleepy garden, nothing in the paved perspective of the sunny street! He stood shaken, half terrified, miserable. He had never felt her nearness so poignantly; her distant potency had never before so mocked his hungering nerves.

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Then, with the cold chilling him like a breath from an icy vault, he heard her, beyond all question, beyond all doubt:

“Anthony!” she called. “Anthony!” From somewhere ahead of him her tones sounded thin and clear; they seemed to reach him, dropping from a window, lingering, neither grave nor gay, but tenderly secure, upon his hearing. He broke into a clattering run over the bricks of the unremarkable street, but soon slowed awkwardly into a walk, jeering at his fancy, his laboring heart, his mad credulity. And then, drifting across his bewildered senses, came the illusive, the penetrating, the remembered odor of lilacs, like a whisper, a promise, a magic caress.

LI

IT was with a puzzled frown that Anthony halted in the heart of the city and considered his present resources, his future possible plans. He had three dollars and some small silver left from the Hardinges, and he regarded with skepticism the profession of chauffeur; he would rather adventure the heavier work of the garages. As the afternoon was far advanced he decided to defer his search until the following morning; and he was absorbed within the gaudy maw of a moving picture theater.

Later, he entered an elaborate maze of mirrors, where, apparently, a sheaf of Susannas unconsciously exhibited their diminishing anatomical charms to a procession of elders advancing two by two through a perspective of sycamores. At the bar, his glass of beer supported by two fried oysters, a sandwich, and a saucer of salted almonds,

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he reflected upon the slough of sterility that had fastened upon his feet: something must be accomplished, decisive, immediate.

He was proceeding toward the entrance when the familiar aspect of a back brought him to a halt. The back moved, turned, and resolved into the features of Thomas Addington Meredith. The mutual surprised recognition was followed by a greeting of friendly slaps, queries, the necessity of instant additional beers, and they found a place at a small, polished table.

He was surprised to discover Tom Meredith the same foxy-faced boy he had left in Doctor Allhop's drugstore . . . It seemed to Anthony that an incalculable time had passed since the breaking of the bottles of perfume; he felt himself to be infinitely changed, older, and the other his junior by decades of experience and a vast accumulation of worldly knowledge, contact with men, women, and events. Tom's raiment did not seem so princely as it had aforetime; the ruby, reputed to be the gift of a married woman, was obviously meretricious, the gold timepiece merely

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commonplace. But Anthony was unaffectedly glad to see him, to discuss homely, familiar topics, repeat affectionately the names of favorite localities, persons.

"I'm in a bonding house here," Tom explained upon Anthony's query. "Nothing in Ellerton for *me*. What are you doing?"

"Nothing, until to-morrow, when I think I'll get something in one of the garages." He thrust his hands negligently into his pockets, and came in contact with his father's forgotten letter. He opened it, gazing curiously at the words: "My dear Son," when Tom, with an exclamation, bent and recovered a piece of yellow paper that had fallen from the envelope. "Is this all you think of these?" he demanded, placing a fifty-dollar bill upon the table.

Anthony read the letter with growing incredulous wonder and joy. He looked up with burning cheeks at his companion. "Remember old Mrs. Bosbyshell?" he questioned in an eager voice. "I used to carry wood, do odd jobs, for her: well, she's dead, and left me—what do you think!—

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father says about forty-seven thousand dollars. It's there, waiting for me, in Ellerton."

Suddenly he forgot Thomas Meredith, the glittering saloon, the diminishing perspective of Susannas—he saw Eliza smiling at him out of the dusk, with her arms full of white lilacs. With an unsteady pounding of his heart, a tightening of the throat, he realized that, miraculously, the happiness which he had imagined so far removed in the uncertain future had been brought to him now, to the immediate present. He could take a train at once and go to her. The waiting was over. The immeasurable joy that flooded him deepened to a great chord of happiness that vibrated highly through him. He folded the letter gravely, thoughtfully. It was but a few hours to Ellerton by train, he knew, but he doubted the possibility of a night connection to that sequestered town. He would go in the morning.

"Thomas," he declared, "I am about to purchase you the best dinner that champagne can shoot into your debased middle. Oh, no, not here, but in a real place where you can catch your

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own fish and shoot a pheasant out of a painted tree."

Thus pleasantly apostrophized, that individual led Anthony to the Della Robbia room of an elaborate hostelry, where they studied the *carte du jour* amid pink tiling and porphyry. There was a rosy flush of shaded lights over snowy linen in the long, high chamber, the subdued passage of waiters like silhouettes, low laughter, and a throbbing strain of violins falling from a balcony above their heads. They pondered nonchalantly the strange names, elaborate sauces; but were finally launched upon suave cocktails and clams. Anthony settled back into a glow of well-being, of the tranquillity that precedes an expected, secure joy. He saluted the champagne bucket by the table.

Then, suddenly, the necessity to speak of Eliza overcame him. He wished to hear her name pronounced by other lips . . . perhaps he would tell Tom all; he was the best of fellows. . . .

"Are the Dreens home?" he asked negligently. "Have you seen Eliza Dreen about—you know, with that soft, shiny hair?"

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Thomas Meredith directed at him a glance of careless surprise. "Why," he answered, "I thought you knew; it seemed to me she died before you left. Anyhow, it was about the same time; it must have been the next week. Pneumonia. This soup's great, Anthony."

LII

THE joy that had sung through Anthony shrunk into an intolerable pain like an icicle thrust into his heart; he swallowed convulsively a spoonful of soup, tasteless, scalding hot, and put the spoon down with a clatter. He half rose from the chair, with his arms extended, as if by that means he could ward off the terrible misfortune that had befallen him. Thomas Meredith, unaware of Anthony's drawn face, his staring gaze, continued to eat with gusto the unspeakable liquid, and the waiter uncorked the champagne with a soft explosion. The wine flowed bubbling into their glasses, and Tom held his aloft. "To your good luck," he proclaimed, but set it down untouched at sight of Anthony's pallor.

"What's the matter—sick? It's the beer and cocktail; it always does it."

"It's not that," Anthony said very distinctly.

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His voice sounded to him like that of a third person. He was laboring to adjust the tumult within him to the fact of Eliza's death; he repeated half aloud the term "dead," and its whispered syllable seemed to fill the entire world, the sky, to echo ceaselessly in space. From the stringed instruments above came the refrain of a popular song; and, subconsciously, mechanically, he repeated the words aloud; when he heard his own voice he stopped as though a palm had been clapped upon his mouth.

"What is it?" Tom persisted; "don't discompose this historical banquet." The waiter replaced the soup with fish, over which he spread a thick yellow sauce. "Go on," Anthony articulated, "go on—" He emptied his champagne glass at a gulp, and then a second. "Certainly a fresh quart," his companion directed the waiter.

Eliza was dead! pneumonia. That, he told himself, was why she had not answered his letter, why, on the steps at Hydrangea House, Mrs. Dreen—hell! how could he think of such things? Eliza . . . dead, cold, who, warm, had kissed him;

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Eliza, for whom all had been dreamed, planned, undertaken, dead; Eliza gone from him, gone out of the sun into the damned and horrible dirt. Tom, explaining him satisfactorily, devoted himself to the succession of dishes that flowed through the waiter's skillful hands, dishes that Anthony dimly recognized having ordered—surely years before. "You're drunk," Thomas declared.

He drank inordinately: gradually a haze enveloped him, separating him from the world, from his companion, a shadowy shape performing strange antics at a distance. Sounds, voices, penetrated to his isolation, rent thinly the veil that held at its center the sharp pain dulled, expanded, into a leaden, sickening ache. He placed the yellow bank note on a silver platter that swayed before him, and in return received a crisp pile, which, with numb fingers, he crowded into a pocket. He would have fallen as he rose from his chair if Tom had not caught him, leading him stumbling but safely to the street.

"Don't start an ugly drunk," Thomas Meredith begged. Without a word, Anthony turned and,

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with stiff legs, strode into the night. Eliza was dead; he had had something to give her, a surprise, but it was too late. A great piece of good fortune had overtaken him, he wanted to tell Eliza, but . . . he collided with a pedestrian, and continued at a tangent like a mechanical toy turned from its course. His companion swung him from under the wheels of a truck. "Wait," he panted; "I'm no Marathon runner. It's hotter'n Egypt."

The perspiration dripped from Anthony's countenance, wet the clenched palms of his hands. He walked on and on, though streets brilliantly lighted and streets dark; streets crowded with men in evening clothes, loafing with cigarettes by illuminated playbills; streets empty, silent, save for the echo of his hurried, shambling footsteps. Eliza was lost, out there somewhere in the night; he must find her, bring her back: but he couldn't find her, nor bring her back—she was dead. He stopped to reconsider dully that idea. A row of surprisingly white marble steps, of closed doors, blank windows, confronted him. "This is where

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I retire," Thomas Meredith declared. Anthony wondered what the fellow was buzzing about: why should he wait for him, Anthony Ball, at "McCann's"?

He considered with a troubled brow a world empty of Eliza. It wasn't possible; no such foolish world could exist for a moment. Who had dared to rob him? In a methodical voice he cursed all the holy, all the august, all the reverent names he could call to mind. Then again he hurried on, leaving standing a ridiculous figure who shouted an incomprehensible sentence.

He passed through an unsubstantial city of shadows, of sudden, clangoring sounds, of the blur of lights swaying in strings above his head, of unsteady luminous bubbles floating before him through ravines of gloom; bells rang loud and threatening, throats of brass bellowed. His head began to throb with a sudden pain, and the pain printed clearly on the bright suffering of his mind a stooping, dusty figure; leaden eyes, a grey face, peered into his own; slack lips mumbled the story of a boy dead long ago—Eliza, Eliza was dead—

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and of a red necktie, a Sunday suit; a fearful figure, a fearful story, from the low mutter of which he precipitantly fled. Other faces crowded his brain—Ellie with her cool, understanding look, his mother, his father frowning at him in assumed severity; he saw Mrs. Dreen, palely sweet in a starlit gloom. Then panic swept over him as he realized that he was unable, in a sudden freak of memory, to summon into that intimate gallery the countenance of Eliza. It was as though in disappearing from the corporeal world she had also vanished from the realm of his thoughts, of his longing. He paused, driving his nails into his palms, knotting his brow, in an agony of effort to visualize her. In vain. “I can’t remember her,” he told an indistinct human form before him. “I can’t remember her.”

A voice answered him, thin and surprisingly bitter. “When you are sober you will stop trying.”

And then he saw her once more, so vivid, so near, that he gave a sobbing exclamation of relief. “Don’t,” he whispered, “not . . . lose

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again—” He forgot for the moment that she was dead, and put out a hand to touch her. Thin air. Then he recalled. He commenced his direct, aimless course, but a staggering weariness overcame him, the toylike progress grew slower, there were interruptions, convulsive starts.

LIII

AT the same time the haze lightened about him: he saw clearly his surroundings, the black, glittering windows of stores, the gleaming rails which bound the stone street. His hat was gone, and he had long before lost the bundle that contained his linen. But the loss was of small moment now—he had money, a pocketful of it, and forty-seven thousand dollars waiting in Ellerton: his father was a scrupulous, truthful, and exact man.

Eliza and he would have been immediately married, gone to a little green village, under a red mountain; Eliza would have worn the most beautiful dresses made by a parrot; but that, he recognized shrewdly, was an idiotic fancy—birds didn't make dresses. And now she was dead.

He entered a place of multitudinous mirrors reflecting a woman's flickering limbs, sly and bearded masculine faces, that somehow were vaguely familiar.

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“Champagne!” he cried, against the bar.

“Your champagne’ll come across in a schooner.”

But, impatiently, he shoved a handful of money into the zinc gutter. “Champagne!” he reiterated thickly. The barkeeper deduced four dollars and returned the balance. “Sink it,” he advised, “or you’ll get it lifted on you.”

With the wine, the mist deepened once more about him; the ache—was it in his head or his heart?—grew duller. He had poured out a third glass when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and, whirling suspiciously, he saw a uniform cap, a man’s gaunt face and burning eyes.

“Brother,” the latter said, “brother, shall we leave this reeking sink, and go out together into God’s night?”

Blinking, Anthony recognized the livery, the accents, of the Salvation Army. A sullen anger burned within him—this man was a sort of official connection of God’s, who had killed Eliza. He smoothed out his face cunningly, moved obediently toward the other, and struck him viciously

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across the face. Pandemonium rose instantly about him, an incredible number of men appeared shouting, gesticulating, and formed in a ring of blurred, grinning faces. The jaw of the Salvation Army man was bright with blood, dark drops fell on his threadbare coat. His hand closed again on Anthony's shoulder.

"Strive, brother," he cried. "The Mansion door is open."

Anthony regarded him with insolent disdain. "Ought to be exposed," he articulated, "whole thing . . . humbug. Isn't any such—such. . . . Eliza's dead, ain't she?"

A ripple of merriment ran about the circle of loose, stained lips; the curious, ribald eyes glittered with cold mirth; the circle flattened with the pressure of those without, impatient for a better view. Anthony surveyed them with impotent fury, loathing, and they met his passionate anger with faces as stony, as inhuman, as cruel, as carved masks. He heard *her* name, the name of the gracious and beautiful vision of his adoration, repeated in hoarse, in maculate, in gibing tones.

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“She’s dead,” he repeated sharply, as though that fact should impose silence on them; “you filthy curs!” But their approbation of the spectacle became only the more marked.

The Salvation Army man fastened his hectic gaze upon Anthony; he was, it was evident, unaware of the blood drying upon his face, of the throng about them. “There is no death,” he proclaimed. “There is no death!”

“But she *is* dead,” Anthony insisted; “pneumonia . . . with green eyes and foggy hands.”

They began an insane argument: Eliza was gone, Anthony reiterated, the other could not deny that she was lost to life, to the sun. He recalled statements of Rufus Hardinge’s, crisp iconoclasms of Annot’s, and fitted them into the patch-work of his labored speech. Texts were flung aloft like flags by the other; ringing sentences in the incomparable English of King James echoed about the walls, the bottles of the saloon, and beat upon the throng, the blank hearts, the beery brains, of the spectators. “Blessed are the pure in heart,” he orated, “for they . . . for they . . .”

LIV

THAT word, "purity," rang like a gong in Anthony's thoughts: Eliza had emphasized it, questioning him. The term became inexplicably merged with Eliza into one shining whole—Eliza, purity; purity, Eliza. A swift impression of massed white flowers swept before him, leaving a delicate and trailing fragrance. He had a vision of purity as something concrete, something which, like a priceless and fragile vase, he guarded in his hands. It had been a charge from her, a trust that he must keep unspotted, inviolable, that she would require—but she was gone, she was dead.

"... through the valley of the shadow," the other cried.

She had left him; he stood alone, guarding a meaningless thing, useless as the money in his pocket.

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A man with bare corded arms and an apron broke roughly through the circle; and with a hand on Anthony's back, a hand on the back of his opponent, urged them toward the door. "You'll have to take this outside," he pronounced; "you're blocking the bar."

An arm linked within Anthony's and swung him aside. "Unavoidably detained by merest 'quaintance,'" Thomas Meredith explained with ponderous exactitude. Unobserved, they found a place at the table they had occupied earlier in the evening. Thomas ordered a fresh bottle, but was persuaded by Anthony to surrender the check which accompanied it.

A sudden hatred for the money that had come too late possessed him: if he had had the whole forty-seven thousand dollars there he would have torn it up, trampled upon it, flung it to the noisome corners of the saloon. It seemed to have become his for the express purpose of mocking at his sorrow, his loss. His hatred spread to include that purity, that virtue, which he had conceived of as something material, an actual possession.

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. . . That, at any rate, he might trample under foot, destroy, when and as it pleased him. Eliza was gone, and all that was left was valueless. It had been, all unconsciously, dedicated to her; and now he desired to cast it into the mold that held her.

He fingered with a new care the sum in his pocket. An admirably comprehensive plan had occurred to him—he would bury them both, the money and purity, beneath the same indignity. Tom Meredith, he was certain, could direct his purpose to its fulfilment. Nor was he mistaken. The conversation almost immediately swung to the subject of girls, girls gracious, prodigal of their charms. They would sally forth presently and “see the town.” Tom loudly asseverated his knowledge of all the inmates of all the complacent quarters under the gas light. Before a cab was summoned Anthony stumbled mysteriously to the bar, returning with a square, paper-wrapped parcel.

“Port wine,” he ejaculated; “must have it . . . for a good time.”

LV

A SEEMINGLY interminable ride followed. They rattled over rough stones, rolled with a clacking tire over asphalt. A smell unnamable, fulsome, corrupt, hung in Anthony's nostrils; the driver objurgated his horse in a desperate whisper; Tom's head fell from side to side on his breast. The mists surged about Anthony, veiling, obscuring all but the sullen purpose compressing his heart, throbbing in his brain.

There was a halt. A rocking pavement and unctuous tones; then a hall, a room, and the tinny racket of a piano, feminine voices that, at the same time, were hoarsely sexless, empty, like harsh echoes flung from a rocky void. A form in red silk took possession of Anthony's hand, sat by his side; a hot breath, a whisper, flattened against his ear. At times he could distinguish Tom's accents; he seemed to be arguing masterfully, but

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a shrill, voluble stream kept pace with him, silenced him in the end.

Anthony strove against great, inimical forces to maintain his sanity of action, ensure his purpose: he sat with a grim, haggard face as rigid as wood, as tense as metal. The cloudy darkness swept over him, impenetrable, appalling; through it he seemed to drop for miles, for years, for centuries; it lightened, and he found himself clutching the sides of his chair, shuddering over the space which, he had felt, gaped beneath him.

In moments of respite he saw, gliding through the heated glare, gaily-clad forms; they danced; yet for all the dancing, for all the colors, they were more sinister than merry, they were incomparably more grievous than gay. A tray of beer glasses was held before him, but he waved it aside. "Champagne," he muttered. The husky voices commended him; a bare arm crept around his neck, soft, stifling; the red silk form was like a blot of blood on the gloom; it spread over his arm like a tide of blood welling from his torn heart.

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He thought at intervals, when the piano was silent, that he could distinguish the sound of low, continuous sobbing; and the futility of grief afforded a contemptuous amusement. "It's fierce," a shrill voice pronounced. "They ought to have took her somewhere else; this is a decent place."

A second hotly silenced this declaration. In the jumble of talk which followed he heard the title "captain" pronounced authoritatively, conclusively imposing an abrupt lull. Men entered. With an effort which taxed his every resource of concentration he saw that there were two; he distinguished two tones—one deliberate, coldly arrogant, the other explosive, iterating noisy assertions. Peering through the film before his eyes, Anthony saw that the first, insignificant in stature, exactly and fashionably dressed, had a countenance flat and dark, like a Chinaman's; the other was a fleshy young man in an electric blue suit, his neck swelling in a crimson fold above his collar, who gesticulated with a fat, white hand.

Anthony felt the attention of the room centered upon himself, he heard disconnected periods;

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“. . . to the eyes. Good fellow . . . threw friend out—one of them lawyer jags, too dam’ smart.” A voice flowed, thick and gummy like molasses, from the redness at his side, “He’s my fellow; ain’t you, Raymond?”

A wave of deathly sickness swept up from the shuddering void and enveloped him. He summoned his dissipated faculties, formed his cold lips in readiness to pronounce fateful words, when he was diverted by the sharp impact of a shutting door, he heard with preternatural clearness a bolt slip in its channel. The young man in the blue suit had disappeared. Again the sobbing, low and distinct, rose and fell upon his hearing.

There was a general stir in the room; the form beside him rose; and he was lunging to his feet when, in the act of moving, he became immovable; he stood bent, with his hands extended, listening; he turned his head slowly, he turned his dull, straining gaze from side to side. Then he straightened up as though he had been opened by a spring.

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"Who—who called?" he demanded. "Who called me—Anthony?"

In the short, startled silence which followed, the room grew suddenly clear before him, the mist dissolved before a garish flood of gaslight that fell upon a grotesque circle of women in shapeless, bright apparel; he saw haggard, youthful countenances on which streaks of paint burned like flames; he saw eyes shining and dead like glass marbles; mouths drawn and twisted as though by torture. He saw the fragile, fashionably dressed youth with the flat face. No one of them could have called him in the clear tone that had swept like a silver stream though the miasma of his consciousness.

Again he heard it. "Anthony!" Its echo ran from his brain in thrills of wonder, of response, to the tips of his fingers. "Anthony!" Oh, God! he knew now, beyond all question, all doubt, that it was the voice of Eliza. But Eliza was dead. It was an inexplicable, a cunning and merciless jest, at the expense of his love, his long-

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ing. . . . "Anthony!" it came from above, from within.

A double sliding door filled the middle of the wall, and, starting forward, he fumbled with its small brass handles. A sudden subdued commotion of curses, commands, arose behind him; hands dragged at his shoulders; an arm as thin and hard as steel wire closed about his throat. He broke its strangling hold, brushed the others aside. The door was bolted. Yes, it came from beyond; and from within came the sobbing that had hovered continuously at the back of his perception.

He shook the door viciously; then, disregarding the hands tearing at him from the rear, burst it open with his shoulder. He staggered in, looking wildly about. . . . It had, after all, been only a freak of his disordered mind, an hallucination of his pain. The room was empty but for the young man in electric blue, now with his coat over the back of a chair, and a girl with a torn waist, where her thin, white shoulder showed dark, reg-

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ular prints, and a tangle of hair across her immature face.

The man in shirt sleeves rose from the couch, on which he had been sitting, with a stream of sudden, surprised oaths. The girl who stood gazing with distended eyes at Anthony turned and flashed through the broken door. "Stop her!" was urgently cried; "the hall door—" Anthony heard a chair fall in the room beyond, shrill cries that sank, muffled in a further space.

The two men faced him in the silent room: the larger, with an empurpled visage, bloodshot eyes, shook with enraged concern; the other was as motionless as a piece of furniture; in his wooden countenance his gaze glittered like a snake's, glittered as icily as the diamond that sparkled in his crimson tie, folded exactly beneath an immaculate collar. Only, at intervals, his fingers twitched like jointed and animated straws.

An excited voice cried from the distance: "She's gone! Alice's face is tore open . . . out the door like a devil, and up the street in her petticoat."

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The man with the flushed face wilted. "This is as bad as hell," he whimpered. "It will come out, sure. You—" He particularized Anthony with a corroding epithet. "The captain is in it deep . . . this will do for him, we'll all go up—"

"Why?" the other demanded. He indicated Anthony with his left hand, while the other stole into his pocket. "He brought her here . . . you heard the girl and broke into the room; there was a fight—a fight." He drew nearer to Anthony by a step.

LVI

ANTHONY gazed above their heads. There, again, clear and sweet, his name shaped like a bell-note. The familiar scent of a springtide of lilacs swept about him; the placid murmur of water slipping between sodded banks, tumbling over a fall; the querulous hunting cry of owls hovered in his hearing, singing in the undertone of that pronouncement of his name out of the magic region of his joy.

"No good," a voice buzzed, indistinct, immaterial. "Who'll shut this—? who'll get the girl?"

"The girl can't reach us alone. . . ."

An intolerable scarlet hurt stabbed at Anthony out of a pungent, whitish cloud. There was a fretful report. A flat, dark face without expression, without the blink of an eyelid, a twitch of the mouth, loomed before him and then shot up into darkness. The hurt multiplied a thousand fold,

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it poured through him like molten metal, lay in a flashing pool upon his heart, filled his brain. He opened his lips for a protest, put out his hands appealingly. But he uttered no sound, his arms sank, grew stiff . . . the light faded from his eyes.

. . . Imponderable silence. Frigid night. . . .

Far off he heard *her* calling him, imperative, confident, glad. Her crystal tones descended into the abyss whose black and eternal walls towered above him. He must rise and bear to her that gift like a precious and fragile vase which he held unbroken in his hands. An ineffable fragrance deepened about him from the massed blooms rosy in the glow where she waited, drawing him up to her out of the chaotic wash beyond the worlds where the vapors of corrupted matter sank and sank in slow coils, falling endlessly, for ever.

THE END

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